

Iran says U.S. bigger threat than nuclear arms

NICOSIA (R) — Iran, accused by the West of seeking nuclear weapons, said on Friday the "arrogant power" of the United States posed a bigger threat to the world than nuclear proliferation. In a defiant speech, supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei attacked last week's summit of United Nations Security Council members as a cover for a U.S. quest to rule the world. World leaders at the summit in New York discussed problems facing the post-cold war world, including nuclear disarmament and the environment. But Mr. Khamenei said these were secondary topics, aimed only to mask the real danger — "bullying of arrogant powers." The superpowers, he said, were responsible for the biggest losses inflicted on mankind through nuclear devices: U.S. atomic bombs dropped on Japan at the end of the World War II and the 1986 explosion at the Chernobyl power plant in the former Soviet Union. "Limit the arrogant power of the United States in the world and the nuclear threat will automatically be curbed," he said. Mr. Khamenei's 40-minute speech to Revolutionary Guards, broadcast on Tehran Radio, was repeatedly interrupted by chants of "Death to America."

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Palestinian journalist axed by masked men

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AP) — A Palestinian journalist who has spoken out against the bands of Arab vigilantes in the occupied lands was attacked by masked men, wielding axes and sticks. Adnan Damir, 38, was in good condition with stitches in his head and left hand Friday after being attacked before dawn Thursday in his home in the West Bank town of Tulkarem. Damir's wife, 27, received two stitches in the head after being struck by an axe. Mr. Damir, a supporter of the PLO's mainstream Fatah faction, blamed followers of the Islamic fundamentalist Hamas group for the attack. Hamas issued a leaflet Friday denying any role.

Soviet immigration dropping to even lower levels

TEL AVIV (AP) — Jewish immigration to Israel from the former Soviet Union dropped by about 50 per cent in the first week in February from already low levels, officials said Friday. Officials of the quasi-government Jewish Agency which brings in immigrants blamed the decline on Israel's worsening economy and said arrivals could drop off more if U.S. loan guarantees were not received. About 700 immigrants arrived on Feb. 1-7, about half the number predicted, agency figures showed. The drop followed January's arrival of 6,200 Jews, which was the lowest level in two years. "The main reason for the reduced numbers right now is the unemployment crisis in Israel," said Gad Ben-Ari, spokesman for the Jewish Agency. Mr. Ben-Ari has said Jews in the former Soviet republics are well aware of Israel's economic situation. Jewish immigration is about 11 per cent in the Jewish state and is believed to be more than double that among immigrants. The best hope to create jobs for the immigrants was through investments in Israel's economy with funds acquired from the U.S. loan guarantees. Mr. Ben-Ari said. "The loan guarantees will automatically be translated into increased immigration," he said.

45 killed in Turkish avalanche

DIYARBAKIR, Turkey (R) — Avalanches smashed into several villages in Turkey on Friday, killing at least 45 people, officials and the Anatolian news agency said. Anatolian said first reports from Akcaayil village in the southeastern province of Sirnak said 31 people had been killed by a snowslide. Fourteen bodies were recovered after avalanches hit three villages in the southeastern province of Batman.

Avalanche kills 7 in Lebanon

BAALBEK, Lebanon (R) — Seven people including three children were killed and four injured in a snow avalanche which destroyed their houses in east Lebanon on Friday, security sources said. The said the avalanche destroyed two houses in the village of Hazarta in the eastern Bekaa valley. Heavy snowfall, now in its fourth day, has cut off dozens of villages and towns in the Bekaa region and mountains to the north and east of Beirut.

Shamir said nominated for peace prize

OSLO, Norway (AP) — Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir has been nominated for the 1992 Nobel peace prize, unofficial but reliable sources said Friday. The sources did not say who made the nomination. The Nobel awards committee, which chooses peace prize winners, declined to comment. The committee does not release a list of candidates for the \$1 million prize, which attracts about 100 nominees a year. Nominations closed a week ago. Among those reportedly nominated were Shulamith Katznelson of Israel, for promoting understanding in the Middle East, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, the Salvation Army and Doctors Without Borders.

Jordan River overflows; floods damage crops, farmlands Storm persists; more rain expected today, tomorrow

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter with agency dispatches

AMMAN — The remnants of the recent snowstorm will continue to affect Jordan in the upcoming two days with more rain, hail and possible snow on very highlands expected in most regions.

The Department of Meteorology announced Friday that rain will continue through today and Sunday but little snow was expected. The low depression which affected Jordan in the past two days has now moved eastward towards southeast Turkey, easing a little the intensity of the storm and the rains on Jordan, said Rafiq Jamil Shaker, the department's acting director.

Mr. Shaker said that Jordan will receive more rain today and Sunday but very little snow will fall on mountains 900 metres high. He warned of frost formation, especially during the night, and cautioned the public to take extra care about water freezing in pipes in the coming two days.

The heavy rain and snow Jordan received in January and February promise a bumper crop for Jordan this year despite the losses sustained due to floods or frost, according to Agriculture Minister Fayez Khasawneh.

In a statement Friday carried by the Jordan News Agency, Petra, the minister said that the rain water will help create pasture lands and increase the output of fruit trees and vegetables as well as increase the livestock wealth of

the Kingdom.

The Ministry of Agriculture advises farmers to embark planting legumes and summer crops as soon as the rains have stopped because they are bound to yield a good harvest this year, said Dr. Khasawneh.

Referring to the damages to the crops in the Jordan Valley affecting vegetables, fruit trees and poultry farms, the minister said that the government was determined to offer compensation to those farmers sustaining losses and will also give farmers in-kind assistance. Fruit growers will receive compensation from funds originally allocated by the ministry for the reclamation of highlands to enable the farmers to rebuild fences and retaining walls. Poultry farmers will receive long-term easy loans to help them resume their activities, the minister noted.

The minister said that a number of farmlands sustained damage not only because of the frost but also due to the foundation of lands as a result of the rising level of water in the Jordan River.

Earlier reports spoke of damage to 198 agricultural units in the central Jordan Valley region as a result of flooding from the Yarmouk River near the Syrian border and the continued flow of water through the wadis.

Minister of Water and Irrigation Samir Kassar made a tour of the area in the Jordan Valley and inspected ongoing work designed to reduce the extent of damages

to farmlands.

In a statement on Jordan Television he said that the flooding in the Yarmouk River that inundated the lands in Jordan was not expected. The water from Yarmouk River plus that flowing from the mountains and water released from the dams have all collected in the farmlands of the Jordan Valley causing damage to large areas, the minister added.

The Public Security Department announced Thursday that 11 persons were injured in 47 road accidents that occurred on Wednesday alone when the snowstorm was at its peak.

For its part, the Civil Defence Department reported numerous emergency cases with its men helping people stranded on the roads or trapped in their cars or people besieged by the floods in their homes.

Heavy rain and snowfall have caused the Jordan River to flood and burst its banks for the first time in four decades, officials said on Friday.

Floods waters had submerged the King Hussein and Prince Mohammad Bridges closing the only crossing points between Jordan and the Israeli-occupied West Bank, they added.

The floods, the first since 1951-52, had also damaged crops on the eastern side of the river, they said.

"The two bridges will not reopen before at least five days," said a police officer. Water, flowed two metres over



A driver negotiates his way through the flooded streets of the capital on Thursday (more photos by Youssef Al 'Allan on page 3)

the wooden slats of the King Hussein Bridge and half a metre above the Prince Mohammad Bridge, closing them for a fourth successive day on Friday.

Around 1,500 people and most of the West Bank's agricultural and other exports cross the King Hussein Bridge each day.

Jordan, normally very short of water, has been hit by three successive regional cold fronts in 1992. Raging snowstorms and gale-force winds have almost brought the country to halt.

The Jordan River, which flows 320 kilometres from Syria and Lebanon to the Dead Sea, is normally shallow and saline.

The heavy rain combined with a rush of water from a burst reservoir on the Israeli-held Golan Heights and melted snow from Syria to turn it into a raging torrent.

The rush of water was so great that the authorities had to release water from the King Talal Dam, one of the valley's main reservoirs.

The sudden burst of water damaged dykes and uprooted trees.

The weather has damaged crops in the Jordan Valley, where the Kingdom grows much of its food.

Flood waters submerged some crops while the cold hit others. Frost had damaged between 50 and 90 per cent of crops, mainly squash, tomatoes, beans and peppers in the north of the valley, officials said.

Talal Ghazawi, head of the farmers' federation there, estimated crop losses at JD 5 million (\$7.8 million).

"We have not seen one sunny day in the past 50 days," said farmer Marwan Malek. "The frost formations of the past two weeks damaged most of our crops and now the river floods."

Mr. Ghazawi said 26,000 dunums of agricultural lands were flooded in the Jordan Valley, the country's main food basket. He said the damaged lands stretched from Adasiyah in the north to the Dead Sea.

Water Minister Samir Kassar said the collapse of a dam in the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights on Wednesday has also significantly

attributed to the floods in Jordan.

"It led to raising the level of water in the Yarmouk River and as a result flooded agricultural lands surrounding the Jordan River," Mr. Kassar said.

"The water in the Jordan River raised to a level never witnessed in the history of the Kingdom and the flood covered an area of 1 kilometre in depth on the Jordanian side," Mr. Ghazawi said.

"It is one of the wettest winters since recorded have been kept," Edith Ritzler, a meteorologist for the Israel weather service, told the Associated Press.

Jerusalem so far has received 945 millimetres of rain compared with an average of 554 millimetres. Tel Aviv, which usually averages 524 millimetres has marked 900 millimetres, Ms. Ritzler said.

She said this year's rainfall was the heaviest in both cities in at least 25 years.

"Some places have received twice their average annual rainfall," she said, "and we are still only in February."

Judge releases ship bound for Syria, police appeal

COPENHAGEN (R) — A Danish court ruled on Friday that a ship carrying Czechoslovak-built tanks believed bound for Syria must be allowed to resume its voyage, but the vessel remained in port after a police appeal.

Justice ministry officials said the case of the Danish-registered Nadia J would now go to the high court, which must decide whether the ministry was right in demanding that the ship's owners apply for a weapons export permit.

The Nadia J was loaded with 12 Russian-designed T-72 tanks, ammunition and spare parts in the Polish port of Szczecin last Saturday. They are thought to be part of a consignment of 250 tanks ordered by Syria from Czechoslovakia last year.

It ran aground on Sunday near the small Danish port of Soebye, west of the great belt waterway from the Baltic to the North Sea. The justice ministry ordered local police not to allow it to leave when it docked there on Monday.

The judge in the Friday hearing ruled that carrying arms through Danish waters did not breach the country's weapons export laws. The ship must be released, he said.

"If permission has to be sought every time a ship carries military equipment through Danish waters, the ministry will drown in paperwork or be deluged with tanks — or both," Ritzler news agency quoted the shipowner's lawyer as telling the court.

The government's action amounted to piracy, the lawyer said, adding that the owner of the Nadia J, Niels Hansen of Svendborg, would demand compensation for the delay.

Last week, German warships in the Mediterranean seized 16 tanks from a German freighter believed to be bound for Syria. Syria has protested against the German action.

CIA chief to visit Mideast

WASHINGTON (AP) — CIA Director Robert Gates is paying get-acquainted visits to his counterparts in three Middle Eastern countries, officials said.

In his first visit to the region since assuming office last November, Mr. Gates will be meeting with intelligence officials in Egypt, Israel and Saudi Arabia.

In addition to general discussions, Mr. Gates is expected to bring up the situation in Iraq, where President Saddam Hussein is still in power despite an economic embargo imposed on his impoverished country by the United Nations.

Mr. Gates, who left Washington earlier this week, is intimately familiar with U.S. policy on Iraq from his days as President Bush's deputy national security advisor, a job he held until taking over the CIA.

The New York Times in Friday editions quoted sources as saying Mr. Gates was selected by Mr. Bush to discuss with the Egyptians and Saudis the diplomatic, military and covert efforts under way to force President Saddam's overthrow.

Secretary of State James Baker told a congressional hearing Thursday the United States was concerned that Iraq might try to rebuild its nuclear weapons programme.

Mr. Baker said the United States was "very disappointed" in Iraq's refusal to cooperate with U.N. inspectors seeking the remainder of Iraq's nuclear, chemical, biological and missile stocks.

"I think that perhaps there might be some additional measures considered within the context of the Security Council" to force Iraq to reveal its arsenals, Mr. Baker added.

Europeans sign union treaty U.S. conditions on loan guarantees confirms to standing American policy

MAASTRICHT, Netherlands (R) — European Community ministers signed a historic treaty on European union on Friday, cementing EC plans for a common market, a single currency and a unified voice on the world stage.

"In Maastricht today another historic step has been taken towards the Europe which together we are building," said Portuguese Prime Minister Anibal Cavaco Silva, whose country holds the presidency of the EC.

The signing took place at the Provincehuis in this southern Dutch town where leaders of the 12 EC member states held tortuous negotiations at a summit last December to hammer out an agreement on political and monetary union.

"This is a historic moment for the 300-million-plus inhabitants of the European Community, a moment marked by satisfaction and hope," said Dutch Prime Minister Ruud Lubbers, who bro-

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Special from Washington

U.S. Secretary of State James Baker told members of Congress Thursday that conditioning additional U.S. assistance to Israel falls in line with long-standing American policy in the region.

"What we say is if you want us to come forward here with significant additional assistance for Israel over and above the very substantial amounts of three to four billion dollars that we grant every year anyway... then please don't ask us to do it under circumstances that would contravene the long-established policy of the United States of America. Please respect our policy views," Mr. Baker told members of the House Foreign Affairs Committee Thursday.

His comments came in response to questions from Congressman Steven Solarz, a member of the committee who is supportive of Israel and who wants the administration to grant Israel's \$10 billion in loan guarantees for settling Soviet Jewish immigrants.

Mr. Solarz, a Democrat from New York, argued that Washington's insistence that Israel refrain from settlement building deprives the Jewish state from leverage needed in its negotiations with the Arabs.

"What concerns me is the extent to which, if we insist that Israel refrain from settlement in order to please the Arabs, we may deprive Israel of the leverage it needs in the negotiations to extract concessions from the Arabs on these and other equally legitimate issues," Mr. Solarz said.

To that comment, Mr. Baker replied that the U.S. was simply adhering to a long-established policy of opposing settlements in the occupied territories. "It's not a case of doing it for Arabs, it's a case of doing it for the policy position of the United States of America," he asserted.

"Additional assistance should be extended only upon conditions that support U.S. policy position," he stressed, pointing out that Washington has been opposed to settlements since 1967.

Mr. Solarz had stated that the Israelis are "legitimately concerned" about the Arab boycott of Israel, about the continued existence of a state of belligerency, about the "sup-

port which some of the Arab states continue to provide for terrorists," and about the continuation of the intifada.

Mr. Baker reminded committee members that it was Israeli leaders who rejected a U.S. proposal — which was accepted by a number of Arab states including Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Jordan — whereby Israel would suspend settlement activity in the occupied territories in return for an end to the Arab boycott of Israel.

On Wednesday, Mr. Baker had also told members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that if the U.S. were to grant Israel its loan guarantee request, it would do so in a manner that does not counter to U.S. policy.

"I'm hopeful that we'll be able to negotiate some arrangements that do not find the United States advancing yet additional assistance in a manner that is contradictory to or in opposition to what has been the long-established policy position of the United States since 1967," Mr. Baker said. The Secretary of State was scheduled to meet Israel's Ambassador to the U.S. Zalman Shoval Friday

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Jordan welcomes U.S. stand on settlements

AMMAN (J.T.) — Jordan has welcomed the U.S. administration's stand vis-a-vis the loan guarantees requested by Israel noting with satisfaction a statement by U.S. Secretary of State James Baker in this regard.

Foreign Minister Kamel Abu Jaber in a statement to the Jordan News Agency, Petra, said that Jordan welcomed the U.S. government's stand and Mr. Baker's statement that Washington would not grant Israel the required guarantees unless the U.S. administration was sure that the funds would not be used to carry out plans opposed to American policies.

The issue of the guarantees has become entangled in Mr. Baker's view with Israel's current campaign of settlement building that could upset Middle East peace talks in Washington. Observers believe Mr. Baker wants a freeze on the settlement building as a condition for the guarantees.

Earlier Mr. Baker was reported to have offered a compromise, allowing Israel to complete housing starts on 13,000 units being constructed in exchange for a subsequent freeze.

In his statement to Petra Friday, Dr. Abu Jaber said that Israel was moving against the will and the desire of the whole international community which strives to arrive at a peace based on justice in the Middle East.

He said Israel's policies give rise to questions on whether the Israeli government is serious about efforts for peace. The minister described Israel's recent deconstruction of the Islamic cemeteries in Jerusalem as a provocative action violating religious, moral and spiritual values and international principles.

He told Petra that the Israelis have recently removed the Al Malha historic cemetery from Jerusalem and destroyed the Mamanallah cemetery.

This practice is part of Israel's ongoing efforts to Judaize the city and to build more settlements on Arab lands at a time when the world community was directing its efforts towards building just peace in the Middle East, Dr. Abu Jaber said.

Dr. Abu Jaber urged peace-loving nations and the world community to help deter such inhuman actions.

FIS, Algerian security clash all over country

ALGIERS (Agencies) — Security forces on high alert for armed attacks fired bullets and tear-gas in cities across Algeria to scatter crowds of Muslim fundamentalists at tense Friday prayers. At least one person was killed, Algerian radio reported.

The interior ministry created a high-tension atmosphere on the eve of the weekly prayers, saying it expected "provocations," including possible armed attacks.

Police and soldiers encircled mosques in strongholds of the Islamic Salvation Front at dawn in Algiers and other cities. The first clashes were reported shortly after noon, and violence spread to several cities, the radio said.

In the capital, gunfire echoed through five suburbs. In two fundamentalist strongholds burning barricades blocked traffic as

troops moved in under a hail of stones, witnesses said.

Security forces, backed by armoured vehicles, set up roadblocks on roads leading to the presidency and foreign ministry, the witnesses added.

The Algerian news agency APS said automatic weapons fire had been heard in Bacharach, La Glediere, El Harrach, Hussein Dey and Kouba — strongholds of the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS).

Algers radio said another person had died in the eastern mountain town of Batna where 12 people were killed and 66 wounded in three days of running battles this week.

On the eve of Friday prayers, Le Matin newspaper speculated whether Batna would be "the starting point for the FIS's overall uprising."

Algeria's collective presidency, sworn in last month after the cancellation of second round voting denied FIS an almost certain general election victory, has banned gatherings outside mosque.

It has also banned the use of mosques for political purposes but has stopped short of outlawing the FIS, which initially urged restraint on its supporters.

A source close to the FIS, which, used gatherings in and around mosques to rally support for an Islamic state, said on Thursday that the movement would ignore the ban.

FIS militants, opposing the country's new rulers, on Friday openly defied an interior ministry vow to restore public order and a warning to Algerians not to be

(Continued on page 3)

Shamir: Israel not obligated by 'all' Camp David accords

TEL AVIV (Agencies) — Israel is no longer obligated by all aspects of the U.S.-sponsored Camp David accords that offered autonomy to Palestinians in the occupied territories, Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir said in interviews published Friday.

"I say in principle we are sticking to the Camp David agreements, but I cannot promise that we will meticulously stick to every word that is mentioned there," Mr. Shamir was quoted as saying.

The statement could signal a change in Israel's position as it negotiates with the Arabs for a peace agreement expected to include limited autonomy on an interim basis for Palestinians in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Mr. Shamir did not specify,

however, what he saw as Israel's obligations under Camp David. He made the statements in a wide-ranging discussion with political reporters from Israeli newspapers, which was reported in most dailies on Friday.

The prime minister said he intended to pursue peace with Palestinians and other Arabs through negotiations but did not want to give up any of the territories occupied in the 1967 Middle East war.

The interview came as Israel's ambassador in Washington, Zalman Shoval, was to meet Friday with U.S. Secretary of State James Baker on Israel's request for \$10 billion in loan guarantees to help absorb Soviet Jewish immigrants.

In testimony Thursday before the House Foreign Affairs Com-

mittee, Mr. Baker conditioned the loan guarantees to a change in Israel's settlement policy.

Mr. Shamir has formally rejected U.S. conditions linking a freeze on Jewish settlements with American aid. But the Yedioth Ahronoth newspaper reported that Mr. Shamir instructed Mr. Shoval to negotiate conditions for getting the loan guarantees.

Mr. Shamir made his comments about the 1978 Camp David accords in answer to questions about an autonomy offer to Palestinians. He noted that the Palestinians themselves have rejected autonomy and added: "Time has passed and things have changed."

Mr. Shamir did not elaborate on what changes he saw in the

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Palestinians say Kuwait making final push against them

By Neil MacFarquhar
The Associated Press

KUWAIT CITY — The Government has begun a final push to force out some 30,000 Palestinians, even those who fought in the resistance against the Iraqi invaders, who remain in the emirate, community leaders say.

"The policy of this country is that they don't want any Palestinians here," said Walid Abu Bakr, an editor at the Al Qabas daily and one of the few Palestinians willing to talk openly about his community's plight.

This has prompted an outcry by Kuwaiti resistance leaders against the government, which fled when Iraq's army invaded.

They are circulating a petition saying the government is persecuting people it promised to treat like Kuwaitis — the Palestinians who stayed and fought.

"These procedures are not warranted by what they've done," the petition reads. "A minority had a bad attitude toward Kuwait."

Similar protests over the last year have had no effect and now the government has ruled that any non-Kuwaiti who does not apply for a residence permit by Feb. 15 faces fines and expulsion.

Each applicant must provide testimonials from five Kuwaitis saying they were loyal during the 7-month occupation.

Before the invasion there were some 450,000 Palestinians in Kuwait. None held citizenship, but they made up the bulk of the country's middle-echelon managers, engineers, technicians and clerks.

An estimated two-thirds fled the Iraqi occupation and have not returned. Tens of thousands who stayed on have been forced out since liberation.

Others were accused of collaborating with the Iraqis and about 100 were slain in a wave of vigilante justice. Most of the 300 people charged with collaboration were Palestinians and Iraqis.

The animosity also stemmed from bitterness throughout the Gulf over the Palestine Liberation Organisation's support for Iraqi President Saddam Hussein.

The native Kuwaitis, a minority in their own country before Iraq's 1990 invasion, are also determined to reshape their society and get rid of the outsiders who once predominated.

The worst off are more than 15,000 Palestinians with travel documents which Egypt issued before the 1967 Arab-Israeli war and now rejects.

Many are teachers fired by the Kuwaitis. Their families are originally from the Israeli occupied Gaza Strip, a coastal region on fringe of the Sinai Peninsula which the Israelis captured in 1967.

They cannot return to Gaza, and Egypt bars them. Only Iraq will take them, they say.

"We've refused some ... because our sources said they helped Kuwaitis hot spoke against Kuwait," the minister said.

Among them is Dr. Ibrahim Zakout, a partner in the private Al Hadi hospital which treated members of the resistance.

Few Kuwaitis speak out against what's happening because the anti-Palestinian policy is largely popular.

But there are some, like Said Al Samak, a writer with Al Qabas.

"Someone lives here 40 years, his children were born and educated here, he stayed with us during the occupation and then we throw him out? Terrible things are happening in this country," he said.

Most Palestinians are desperate. They have not worked in 18 months and are living off dwindling savings or selling household goods for whatever they can get.

A Jordanian passport and is married to a prominent Kuwaiti writer, Laila Al Othman, has been refused a residence permit. He is considering moving to Jordan.

The minister acknowledged that the authorities have refused residence permits even to Palestinians who produced their required testimonials.

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More stringent probe into Shin Bet's methods urged after Palestinian dies in custody

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AP) — An Israeli human rights group on Wednesday demanded an independent investigation into the case of a Palestinian who died after complaining to a judge he was being tortured.

Police opened a probe into the death of Mustafa Akawi, 36, who was in the custody of the Shin Bet secret service, but the case renewed calls by Israeli liberals for a more stringent watch on Shin Bet's handling of prisoners.

The death also brought new demands by Palestinian leader Faisal Hussein for international protection for residents of the Israeli-occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip during current peace negotiations, an idea vehemently opposed by Israel.

Akawi, a cosmetics salesman, died on Monday night or Tuesday in a Shin Bet lockup in the occupied West Bank town of Hebron. Relatives said he was in good health before his arrest on Jan. 22 in a roundup of about 70 Palestinian suspects.

He had been in court Monday for a hearing on extending his custody without charge, and his Israeli lawyer, Leah Tzmel, said he complained of torture to the judge.

"The death of a young healthy prisoner ... after he complained that he was being tortured during interrogation raises many questions," the human rights group Betselem said in a written statement.

The group, formed by Israeli liberals and academics, said it was demanding an investigation by a public committee headed by a judge in a letter to Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir and several other officials.

Betselem also urged establishment of an independent body to supervise the Shin Bet, which regularly interrogates Palestinian suspects. The Shin Bet also runs a network of informers to keep track of residents in the occupied territories.

Israeli authorities would say only that the case is now being investigated by national police.

In his ruling, Judge Muki Knobler wrote, according to the Hadashot daily: "There is suspicion in my heart that there is something to what he (Akawi) said."

Mr. Knobler ordered police to investigate the allegations and asked for a medical checkup for Mr. Akawi, but also extended his detention by eight days. Ms. Tzmel said.

Betselem, which investigates human rights violations in the occupied territories, maintains five Arab detainees died earlier during interrogation in the four-year Palestinian uprising. It says two others committed suicide during breaks in interrogation.

Human rights groups have alleged Palestinian detainees are routinely tortured through beatings, sleep deprivation, shackling in painful positions and other methods.

Israeli officials have denied the allegations, saying cases of mistreatment are rare and always investigated.

Ms. Tzmel said she did not see marks on Akawi, who was fully clothed, and was not allowed to speak to her client. "We left him with the judge, and he showed the judge his beating marks," Ms. Tzmel said.

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Habash enraged by detention

PARIS (R) — Palestinian leader George Habash was so furious at being held by police during his stay in a Paris hospital that he pulled medical monitoring wires off his chest, a senior aide said in an interview published on Friday.

Fouad Abu Ahmad, a senior member of Habash's Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), told the French daily Le Figaro that Habash's health suffered badly from the furore over his admission to France but was now improving.

"He is better now but the aggressive attitude of the French security services had a severe effect on his health and he needs more rest," Mr. Ahmad said.

"Dr. Habash was so angry he pulled off the instruments stuck to his chest. All that was very bad for him."

Dr. Habash's three-day stay in

France last week was a major embarrassment to President Francois Mitterrand and his government and cost five senior civil servants their jobs.

Frustrated by in-fighting within the Palestinian independence movement, Habash pioneered acts of guerrilla violence against Israeli targets outside the Middle East, including a series of plane hijacks in the 1970s.

He was said to be suffering from a stroke when he was flown to Paris from Tunis by the French Red Cross.

After news of his presence broke, he was placed under police custody in his hospital room for 24 hours before being bundled out of the country.

Mr. Ahmad said between seven and 10 French security officers had rummaged through his belongings, briefly confiscated

documents and trying to force a lock.

Two dozen Jewish settlers demonstrated outside the house of PFLP supporter Riad Al Malki in Ramallah in the occupied West Bank on Wednesday and called for legal action against him.

"Mr. (Justice Minister Dan) Meridor, what else has to happen before you take legal action against Riad Al Malki, George Habash and other known investigators of terrorist activity?" said a pamphlet they distributed.

The settlers said Israel should have extradited Habash. They blame the PFLP for ambushes in the occupied Arab territories in which five Israelis have been killed since last October.

Troops allowed the settlers to demonstrate for half an hour and then told them to disperse, which they did.

Detained Israeli's family says he is no spy

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (R) — The family of an Israeli Arab held in Egypt on suspicion of spying said on Friday that he could not possibly have been engaged in espionage.

"We do not believe what is happening," Saleh Masrati said of his brother Fares, "He is a simple person and is not educated or sophisticated enough to be able to carry out such things."

Egyptian security sources said on Wednesday Fares Subhi Masrati, 41, and his daughter Fayza, 17, had been arrested on suspicion of collecting military information for Israel.

ADC calls for halt to Israeli loan guarantees

WASHINGTON (USIA) — The American Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC) is calling on Congress to reject Israel's request for \$10 billion in loan guarantees.

ADC President Albert Makhoul told reporters at a Feb. 4 news conference that the ADC will establish a "national wide consumer drive" to educate the American public about the loan guarantee request.

He said that many more Americans, once made aware of the issue, would oppose Congressional approval of the measure. "Our responsibility at this point is to let the American people know that they are about to get fleeced, and they are not even aware of it," Israel has sought the loan guarantees to help settle Soviet Jewish immigrants in Israel.

Were the United States to guarantee the loans, banks would lend to Israel at a lower rate of interest.

Mr. Makhoul argued that economically, the United States can ill afford the risk of assuming responsibility for the Israeli loans because it is suffering a recession.

"If we can hammer that issue home, and ask each and every one of these members of Congress ... and local governments, as well ... to put their position on record, I think they will have to answer to the American people."

He called on the members of the U.S. Congress to assume "their responsibilities, both legal and moral," citing a recent Wall Street Journal/NBC News poll, which showed that 80 per cent of the American people are opposed to granting the loan guarantees.

Mubarak says economy ahead of political reform

CAIRO (R) — President Hosni Mubarak said in remarks published on Friday Egypt remained committed to economic reforms but he dismissed opposition demands for a new more democratic constitution as untimely.

"I can confirm that we are on track according to the (economic) timetable, confidently and from good to better," President Mubarak said in an interview with Cairo's Al Ahram newspaper.

"We still have some years to complete the cure. We have to complete it. Stopping or hesitating at taking the cure means a return of the malady more forcefully," he said.

President Mubarak said the measures taken so far represented a first phase, adding that the second stage was under way to free prices.

He said international confidence in the Egyptian economy was growing, citing what he said "almost daily offers to place billions of dollars as deposits in Egyptian banks."

Asked about calls for constitutional amendments, the president said his administration was more concerned about the economy.

"Constitutional amendments will not achieve people's hopes for more jobs, more production, more income and better services," President Mubarak said.

"Amendments are not a priority and no one has the right to claim himself a guardian on the people," he added.

President Mubarak, who once said he was giving his countrymen calculated "doses of democracy," said in remarks published last week political reform must be gradual.

Middle East News in Brief

Saudi paper says "clip Saddam's wings"

NICOSIA (R) — A Saudi Arabian newspaper said on Friday Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's "wings should be clipped" as he harbored a desire to re-occupy Kuwait and still kept hundreds of Scud missiles in hiding. In a commentary carried by the official Saudi Press Agency (SPA), Al Yom daily said: "It is inevitable that Saddam's wings be clipped and that he be prevented from spreading them again over the region to avoid a recurrence of what he did. Al Yom said the Iraqi president 'still retains hundreds of Scud missiles in Iraqi hideouts outside the reach of United Nations inspectors.' The U.S. News and World Report magazine said in its Saturday issue last week that Iraq was still producing Scud missiles at a secret location and now had 800 of the weapons.

Sudan police question archbishop, order says

ROME (R) — Police have questioned Khartoum's archbishop about a letter by Roman Catholic bishops in Sudan accusing the military government of discrimination against non-Muslims, a religious order said on Friday. The headquarters of the Combonian Missionary Order said Sudanese authorities had also tried to stop distribution of an Arabic edition of the letter in the central town of El Obeidi. A statement by the order, which has more than 200 missionaries in Sudan, said police had questioned Archbishop Gabriel Zubeir Wako. It gave no details. The order said last month the government had ordered the seizure of the letter because it "violates national security and provokes civil strife." It is very evident that present government policies are aimed at creating one nation, a nation that is Islamic in religion and Arab in culture, in total disregard of the large number of Sudanese citizens who are of other faiths and

cultures," the letter from the bishops said. Last March, Khartoum introduced a new penal code derived from Islamic Sharia law. About 70 per cent of Sudan's population of 26 million people are Muslim, and animists make up about 25 per cent. Christians make up about five per cent and are concentrated in the South.

Drug sweeps in several Syrian cities

DAMASCUS, Syria (AP) — Anti-narcotics agents arrested 40 drug smugglers, seizing 33 kilograms of hashish and 435 grammes of heroin during sweeps in several Syrian cities, the Al Baath daily reported Friday. It said the arrests were made over the past few days. Syria has jailed hundreds of addicts and smugglers in a bid to control drug abuse and dealing. East Lebanon's Bekaa Valley is one of the main hashish-growing and cocaine processing centres in the region. The lush valley between the Lebanon and anti-Lebanon ranges is controlled by troops from Syria, the main power broker in Lebanon. Damascus recently has pledged to cooperate with a regional anti-drug committee to combat illicit drug trafficking in the Middle East.

Former British Hostage Jack Mann leaves hospital

NICOSIA, Cyprus (AP) — Jack Mann, the former British hostage held in Beirut, was released from a royal air force hospital Friday where he had spent nearly a month suffering from pneumonia. Mr. Mann was "quite frail" after leaving St. Mary's hospital at the British sovereign base of Akrotiri in south Cyprus to travel to his home in the island capital, Nicosia, said base spokesman Maj. Rocky Hitchcock. Mr. Mann, 77, left the hospital in the company of his wife Sunnie "and will convalesce at his home from his illness," Maj Hitchcock added.

U.S. policy makes Bush Iraq's chief villain

By Bernd Debusmann
Reuters

BAGHDAD — George Bush is appearing on Iraqi television more frequently than Saddam Hussein these days, with a soundbite so familiar it no longer needs Arabic subtitles.

At least once a night, sometimes twice, Bush stars briefly in a slickly produced documentary series called "The File" which made its debut on Jan. 17, a year to the day after U.S. bombs began falling on Iraq in the opening attack of the Gulf war.

Sandwiched between shots of the White House, Cruise missiles taking off for targets in Iraq, devastated power stations and broken bridges, there is a nine-second spot featuring Bush.

"Let me also make clear that the United States has no quarrel with the Iraqi people," he says.

Cut. Switch to an emaciated baby, eyes too large for its shrunk face. Cut. Switch to a sobbing mother at the funeral of her child. Cut. Switch to a grizzled old man in front of the ruins of what used to be his house.

Iraqis tend to take their government-run media with a

large dose of scepticism but the new series touches responsive chords in a country where most people now appear to blame George Bush, not Saddam Hussein, for the daily misery of their lives.

There are no opinion polls in Iraq, a complex and secretive society difficult for outsiders to gauge.

But for a visitor long familiar with Iraq and returning for the first time since the war, one of the most striking aspects of change is the extent of agreement on who is the chief villain in the latest drama in the nation's long, blood-soaked history.

The U.S. president, a year after the Gulf war, inspires rage, frustration, bitterness and, in some cases, a sense of betrayal that go far deeper than the ritual chants of "down, down Bush" at government-orchestrated demonstrations.

Visit a pharmacy and sooner or later a disappointed client will curse Bush (usually pronounced Bosh) for the absence of medicine. Listen to shoppers at a food market and you will soon hear Bush blamed for high prices. Talk to a civil servant and Bush's name will be linked with low wages.

In the city of Hilla, a resident, carefully making sure that the government official accompanying a foreign correspondent was out of earshot, whispered urgently: "Tell that bastard Bush he let the people down. Because of him, thousands were executed."

Cut. Switch to an emaciated baby; eyes too large for its shrunk face. Cut. Switch to a sobbing mother at the funeral of her child. Cut. Switch to a grizzled old man in front of the ruins of what used to be his house.

Hilla was one of a string of southern towns where Shiite Muslims rose in rebellion against Saddam after the Gulf war, encouraged by what they interpreted as Bush promises of U.S. help for Iraqis trying to topple their leader.

Saddam's army was defeated in the war but was strong enough to deal with lightly armed insurgents. Victorious U.S. troops who stood by and did nothing.

Anti-Bush feelings were not always as widespread as they appear to be now.

In the first days of the war,

Baghdad residents report, some citizens clambered onto the roofs of their houses and cheered as U.S. missiles levelled such symbols of Saddam's power as the defence ministry and Baath Party headquarters.

There was, then, an air of expectation, a sense that somehow a new chapter in Iraqi history would open. That mood is gone.

"Anti-U.S. feelings have been rising month after month," said an international relief official who arrived in Iraq about two months after the ceasefire. "But the anger is directed against Bush rather than the American people."

Bush's stated policy — keeping Saddam "a pariah" until he falls — is widely known in Iraq from foreign broadcasting stations.

But as most Iraqis see it, trade sanctions hurt the people, not Saddam or his top aides.

Many have arrived at complex conspiracy theories to explain the gap between declared aims and actual results.

A thesis frequently heard during a month in Baghdad and travels through southern Iraq, was that Bush and Saddam acted in concert to lure dissidents into the open and

destroy them.

Such ideas might sound absurd outside Iraq but they point to distrust with which the Bush administration is seen.

"They must have made some kind of deal," said a Baghdad engineer with an advanced degree from a European university. "Otherwise, how can you explain that Bush did nothing when the regime here was shaking?"

At the height of twin revolts by Kurds in the north and Shiites in the south, anti-Saddam forces held most of Iraq's territory and fought within an hour's drive from Baghdad.

Helicopter gunships, tanks and artillery cut the dissidents to pieces. Now even Iraqi opposition leaders — none of whom are considered a serious threat here — admit there is scant hope of toppling Saddam in the foreseeable future.

"We don't expect an easy or short-term solution," Abbas Mehdi, chairman of a U.S.-based opposition committee said in New York recently.

"Saddam's forces have crushed organised resistance ... the Iraqi people could not believe the U.S. would let them down when they needed help the most."

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel: 77111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

18:00 Les Tortues Ninja
18:30 La Famille Fontaine
19:00 News in French
19:15 Documentary
19:20 News in Hebrew
20:00 News in Arabic
20:30 American Funniest Home Video
21:00 Encounter
21:30 For the Sake of Children
22:00 News in English
22:20 Switched at Birth

PRAYER TIMES

05:06 Fajr
06:26 Sunrise (Sunrise) Dubai
11:49 Dhuhur
14:47 Asr
17:12 Maghrib
18:32 Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church Swedish, Tel. 510740
Assumption of God Church, Tel. 632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440

De la Salle Church Tel. 661757
Terrence Church Tel. 622366
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 623541
Anglican Church Tel. 625383, Tel. 625343
Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 717331
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 717261
St. Epiphane Church Tel. 717151
Armenian International Church Tel. 685326
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 811285
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints Tel. 623824, 654932
Church of Nazareth Tel. 675691

Agaba 7/15
Aqaba 1/8
Jordan Valley 6/14

Yesterday's high temperatures:
Amman 6, Aqaba 89 Humidity readings:
Amman 17 per cent, Aqaba 32 per cent

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:
Dr. Bakajal Badr 849362
Dr. Yousef Samour 615648
Dr. Abdul Majid Al Saeed 791405
Dr. Issam Marqas 776046
First pharmacy 770336
Ferdows pharmacy 637053
Al Asena pharmacy 623672
Al Salam pharmacy 636730
Yaq. pharmacy 644945
Sa. pharmacy 637660
IRBID:
Dr. Mohammad Khalil 653681
Al Saana pharmacy 273825

Min/Max. temp.
Amman 0/6

ZARQA:

Dr. Yalaya Al Tarif 774111
Khalifa pharmacy 95417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 637111
Civil Defence Department 661111
Civil Defence Immediate Response 63041
Rescue Police 192, 621111, 637777
Fire Brigade 891228
Blood Bank 773121
Highway Police 843402
Traffic Police 896390
Public Security Department 63021
Hotel Complaints 605800
Price Complaints 661176
Water and Sewerage 897467
Complaints 661176
Amman Municipality 787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121
Overseas Calls 010230
Central Amman Telephone Repairs 623101
Abdali Telephone Repairs 661101

Jordan Television

773111
Radio Jordan 774111
Water Authority 660101
Jordan Electricity Authority 815615
Electric Power 636381
RJ Flight Information 06-53300
Queens Alia Int. Airport 06-53300

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
Hussien Medical Centre 81381/332
Khalifa Maternity, J. Amn. 644281/6
Abdali Maternity, J. Amn. 642441/2
Jabal Amman Maternity 642362
Malton, J. Amman 636140
Palestine, Shamsi 664171/4
Shamsi Hospital 669131
University Hospital 845845
Al-Mushtak Hospital 667227/9
The Islamic, Abdali 661271/7
Al-Abi, Abdali 664164/6
Italian, Al-Muhajira 771101/3
Al-Bashir, J. Ashrafieh 77111/26
Army, Malton 891611/15
Queens Alia Hospital 602240/90
Amal Hospital 674155
ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital 09/883323

Zarqa National Hospital

(09)900560
Ibn Sina Hospital 09/986732
Al Hikma Modern Hospital 09/90990
IBBID:
Princeess Basma Hospital 02/275553
Greek Catholic Hospital 02/272273
Ibn Al Nafies Hospital 02/247100
AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital 03/314111

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (08)53300-5, where it should always be verified.

ARRIVALS
Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)
06:00 Kuala Lumpur, Singapore (RJ)
09:00 Damascus (RJ)

Other Flights (Terminal 2)

06:30 Paris, Damascus (AF)
08:15 Beirut (B) (AF)
13:30 Samra (TY)

MARKET PRICES

Upper/lower price in file per kg.
Apple (red) 700/700
Apple (yellow) 500/500
Banana 500/450
Banana (Mekassar) 550/500
Beans 700/600
Cabbage 180/120
Carrot 220/120
Cauliflower 220/120
Cucumbers (large) 300/250
Cucumbers (small) 340/250
Eggplant 250/200
Garlic 250/200
Lemon 180/120
Marrow (large) 300/250
Marrow (small) 300/250
Onion (dry) 280/150
Onion (green) 220/120
Orange 420/250
Pepper (hot) 1000/800
Pepper (sweet) 480/420
Potato 380/250
Radish 240/120
Sage 600/500
Spinach 280/220
Tomato 280/220

Other Flights (Terminal 2)

06:15 Beirut (RJ)
07:00 Aqaba, Hail (RJ)
10:45 Brussels, London (RJ)
11:00 Vienna, Frankfurt (RJ)
11:30 London (RJ)
11:30 Frankfurt, Vienna (RJ)
11:30 Thibon (RJ)
11:30 Helsinki, Aqaba (RJ)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)

06:15 Beirut (RJ)
07:00 Aqaba, Hail (RJ)
10:45 Brussels, London (RJ)
11:00 Vienna, Frankfurt (RJ)
11:30 London (RJ)
11:30 Frankfurt, Vienna (RJ)
11:30 Thibon (RJ)
11:30 Helsinki, Aqaba (RJ)

Balqa officials review damage

SALT (Petra) — Balqa Governor Faleh Gharaibeh and Director of the Balqa Police Department Brig. Adel Al Amouti Thursday paid an inspection visit to Deir Alla District to get first hand information on the situation of citizens following the waves of frost, heavy rainfall and snow which hit the country and caused great damage to roads and crops.

Assistant Balqa Governor Abdullah Abu Nawwar said the various departments in the governorate have mobilised and put their equipment on alert, in case of any emergency that might result from the conditions currently affecting the country.

He noted that all roads in the governorate are passable and that all essential services are available in the various parts of the governorate.



ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW — Civil Defence Department (CDD) Director Maj. Gen. Afif Al Ghoul discussed Thursday with an international expert on public safety and environment issues related to the protection of the environment. Maj. Gen. Ghoul briefed Bika Hameen, who is currently on a visit to the Kingdom, on the role of the CDD in protecting the Jordanian environment from pollution. The meeting was attended by a representative of the Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs and the Environment, Issat Abu Hameen.

Council of Ministers to receive comprehensive study on unemployment

AMMAN (J.T.) — Minister of Labour Abdul Karim Al Kabarti plans to submit to the Council of Ministers Tuesday a comprehensive study on the situation of the workforce in Jordan together with a survey on the number of job-seekers, including Jordanians and expatriates.



Abdul Karim Al Kabarti

The announcement was made Friday by Mr. Kabarti in a statement to the Jordan News Agency, Petra, noting that the Cabinet will dedicate Tuesday's regular session to reviewing this particular topic. The Ministry of Labour is submitting to the Council of Ministers a set of proposals about means it finds fit to deal with the problem of unemployment in Jordan, Mr. Kabarti added.

There is a clear contradiction in the available figures given about the volume of non-Jordanian workers in the Kingdom and the ministry is determined to conduct a comprehensive survey in order to identify the problem correctly and to work out a plan to deal with it in the future, the minister noted.

labour market in Jordan.

Last December, Mr. Kabarti said that the Ministry of Labour was conducting a statistical survey to determine the Jordanian labour market's needs of non-Jordanian workers before any move can be taken to reorganise the local labour market.

He said that 162,000 Egyptian workers have been found to be working in the Kingdom, but that only 10,000 of them hold valid work permits. The minister said the Labour Ministry has been demanding that the non-Jordanians working here without permits obtain them in accordance with Jordanian laws and regulations.

Non-Jordanian Arabs pay JD 100 a year for their work permits while non-Arab workers are charged JD 300 for work permits. In his December statement, Mr. Kabarti expressed hope that there would be closer cooperation between employers and the Ministry of Labour to reorganise the local labour market and open the way for Jordanians to find

jobs.

Earlier, the minister denied a report in the local press that Saudi authorities have arbitrarily dismissed from service Jordanian workers who had been employed by the Saudi public or private sectors.

In a statement Thursday to the London-based Saudi daily Al Sharq Al Awsat, Mr. Kabarti said that the Ministry of Labour in Jordan has not received any complaint by any person in this respect. The Labour Ministry, he noted, is the responsible authority that deals with all matters concerning Jordanian workers abroad.

In his statement to the Saudi newspaper, Minister Kabarti voiced Jordan's deep appreciation of the good brotherly treatment accorded to Jordanian workers in Saudi Arabia. He said that Jordanians working in Saudi Arabia enjoy full respect and appreciation of their efforts by the Saudi businesses and authorities.

Condition on loans confirm to U.S. policy

(Continued from page 1)

afternoon to further discuss with him Israel's loan guarantee request from the U.S.

Up until the Carter administration, Washington had held that settlements are illegal. When he took office, President Reagan said the settlements are "not illegal" but "not in the best interests of peace." The Bush administration has maintained the same line.

There has been little definitive public information as to the behind-the-scenes negotiation between the administration and the Israeli government on the latter's loan guarantee request. What is certain is that pro-Israel members of Congress, who in September last year lost a public fight against the president on the issue, are now taking a much lower profile, leaving the task of the deal to be worked out between the administration and Tel Aviv. They have not refrained however from attempting to soften the administration's terms for the loan guarantees.

Rather than pressure the administration to provide loan guarantees to Israel, most pro-Israel members preferred to ask questions about what they view as Washington's "unpopular" relation with Damascus and about Israel's "non-compliance" with U.N. resolutions. One Democrat from New York, Congressman Elliott Engel, told Secretary Baker: "I want to re-emphasize the importance that many of us feel about providing the loan guarantees to Israel on humanitarian grounds, and I hope the negotiations which I know are going on behind the scenes between our government and the Israeli government will come to fruition and those loan guarantees will be provided."

The Bush administration has, on a number of occasions, declared its support for the principle of absorption of Israel. Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs, Edwyed Djerejian told members of Congress in November that the administration would support the loan guarantees for the purpose of absorbing Soviet Jewish immigrants into Israel "provided acceptable terms and conditions (are) worked out." This week's news reports have indicated that the administration is willing to consider Israel's request if the latter agrees to complete only those settlers' houses already under construction in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and to halt any new housing starts.

These reports indicate that that position, which is still subject to modification as negotiations continue, also envisions conditions that would support the completion of settlers' housing now under construction in the occupied territories.

According to the New York Times, U.S. officials have indicated to Israeli officials that Washington would be willing to consider an arrangement under which Israel could complete the roughly 9,000 housing units already under construction in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. However, the U.S. would want to see an end to all "new housing starts," a term which Mr. Baker declined to define in Thursday's hearing. Israel's violation of that condition would bring about a

halt in the loan guarantees, the New York Times report stated.

According to the same report, the administration would want to deduct from each year's loan guarantees an amount equal to that spent by Israel on roads, infrastructure and housing in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The influential Senator Patrick Leahy, chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee which oversees foreign aid, has endorsed the administration's plan to insist on a halt to new Israeli settlement building as a condition for the guarantees. Mr. Leahy, who originally proposed the "deductibility" formula — whereby the U.S. would deduct from each year's loan guarantees an amount equal to that spent in the territories — said that if the Israelis thought they could get an easier deal from Congress, they should "forget it."

Israeli officials have been exploring the possibility of a compromise whereby the Leahy deductions to the 9,000 housing starts that would be completed. They have also been attempting to get Washington to agree to "normal" Israeli settlement activity in the West Bank and Gaza Strip where Israel would be allowed to initiate a limited number of additional starts every year.

Mr. Baker declined to answer specific questions on the guarantees — such as how exactly the administration would define "settlement starts" — saying these are issues he had to discuss with Mr. Shoval on Friday. But he did point out that the administration would still have to consider the likelihood of Israel's repayment of the loans even if Israel has offered to pay the U.S. the "set aside" fee. According to the New York Times, the anticipated cost of this to the American Treasury is several hundred million dollars, that would have to be set aside by law to cover any Israeli default.

Asked by Congressman Benjamin Gilman whether or not Israel had had an "excellent record" on loans, Mr. Baker said: "Generally speaking, because we appropriate the money up here (in Congress) with which to repay the loans."

The House Appropriations Subcommittee on Foreign Operations is planning to hold a hearing in two weeks on Israel's loan guarantee from the U.S.

Secretary Baker denied reports that the U.S. administration plans to step into the peace process in the next round of bilateral peace talks scheduled to be held in Washington on Feb. 24. "There are no plans on my part to do any more than I've been doing since we began this odyssey of trying to foster these talks, and to bring the parties together," Mr. Baker said. News reports had stated that the next round of bilateral talks in Washington was delayed from Feb. 10 until Feb. 24 to allow for Mr. Baker's return from Russia on Feb. 21. "We have told the parties... that we expect to be a driving force behind the discussions. That remains our policy... We therefore have no plans to conduct ourselves any differently than we have before," he asserted.

Conference on state of children again delayed

AMMAN (J.T.) — A national conference to address the state of children in Jordan that had been originally scheduled for Tuesday and postponed for Saturday because of the weather conditions has been put off until the end of April.

The postponement came in a brief statement carried by the Jordan News Agency, Petra, which gave no other details. The conference, organised under the patronage of His Majesty King Hussein and Her Majesty Queen Noor, is expected to be held at the Royal Cultural Centre in Amman.

The conference was organised by the Ministry of Planning in cooperation with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) as a direct response by Jordan to the U.N. Summit for Children held in September 1990.

The conference will discuss

working papers covering areas of health, education, environment and the role of information and the media in highlighting children's causes and advancing their welfare.

The conference is held in implementation of a recommendation adopted by the World Summit for Children, which was held on Sept. 29 and 30, 1990. Her Majesty Queen Noor headed the Jordanian delegation to the summit, which came up with a world declaration on child survival, protection and development.

The summit adopted a broad series of goals to be implemented in the 1990s. The goals included inter alia a reduction by one half of the under age of five mortality rate, halving maternal mortality, providing basic education to all children, eradicating polio by 1995 and making family planning services accessible to all couples.

Officials consider building new clinics to deal with high doctors' unemployment

AMMAN (Petra) — Director of the Development and Employment Fund at the Planning Ministry Abdul Ilah Abu Ayyash and the president of the Jordanian Medical Association (JMA) Thursday held a meeting aimed at discussing the best means for finding jobs for unemployed doctors through opening special clinics for them.

The fund will provide jobless doctors with soft loans to set up their own clinics, with main focus to be on remote areas in the badia (desert), south Jordan and the Jordan Valley.

The JMA will coordinate with the various committees at the governorate level to identify population concentrations and residential areas where such projects can be implemented. Both the DEF and the JMA agreed to

cooperate with the governors, mayors and heads of municipal councils in undertaking a study aimed at assessing the quality and standard of medical services needed for such residential gatherings.

The findings of the study will serve as a basis for setting up individual medical clinics or medical compounds. This effort by the DEF and the JMA comes in implementation of the government's policy aimed at finding jobs for unemployed Jordanians through creating income-generating projects or self-run business.

It should be noted that unemployment is especially high among doctors and engineers because of the great turnout of graduates in the country.

ESCWA meeting to discuss 1992-97 plans for member states

AMMAN (J.T.) — Jordan will take part in a meeting by member countries of the U.N. Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) to take place in Cairo today and Sunday.

Along with Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, Palestine, Kuwait, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Oman, Yemen and Egypt will take part in the meeting, which will be dedicated to examining the regional economic and social medium term plan for the ESCWA region between 1992 and 1997, according to a statement by the Amman-based ESCWA regional office.

The statement said that the meeting is to be held under the chairmanship of Dr. Tayseer Abdul Jabbar, ESCWA executive

secretary, who left Amman for Cairo Wednesday.

Through the meeting, ESCWA aims at initiating and facilitating concerted action for the economic reconstruction and development of the region, raising the level of the economic activity in Western Asia and at maintaining and strengthening the economic relations of the countries of that area both among themselves and with other countries of the world, the statement noted.

Officials from the 13 ESCWA member states will work together in order to identify the priorities in the field of cooperation and development among the regional group. They will be assisted by ESCWA experts and economists, the statement added.

It said Dr. Abdul Jabbar will



Tayseer Abdul Jabbar

lead the ESCWA delegation participating to the works of the meeting of the Arab League's Economic and Social Council due to start Wednesday in the Egyptian capital.

Conference calls for more attention to deteriorating environment, minister says

AMMAN (Petra) — Minister of Municipal and Rural Affairs and the Environment Abdul Razzak Tubeishat Thursday returned home after heading the Jordanian delegation to the third extraordinary session of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) board, which includes 50 members representing 50 countries.

In an arrival statement, Mr. Tubeishat said participants discussed a comprehensive report covering the state of the environment over the last 20 years. The report will be presented to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development due to be held in Brazil next June.

The report stressed the importance of formulating detailed and clear cut plans of action to be presented to the Earth Summit, which will be convened in Brazil in June, to endorse the plans and ensure the necessary funds to implement them.

The report found that the state of the world environment is worse than it was before two decades, despite all the efforts made since the Stockholm Conference on the World environment.

Mr. Tubeishat said the report sums up practical objectives which can be achieved during the next decade. The report said such targets and goals can serve as an agenda for the global effort to



Abdul Razzak Tubeishat

safeguard the environment during the next decade.

Participants also discussed a plan of action for combating desertification and recognised the need for a global response to deal with desertification and for drawing up national plans of action to address this global issue. They called for increasing financial allocations to support these programmes.

Another topic of discussion during the Nairobi meeting dealt with sustainable development policies and the best use of natural resources, which have been formulated with a view to serving future generations, Mr. Tubeishat said. He briefed participants on Jordan's experience in the area of protecting the environment and on Jordan's

national strategy paper on how to protect the environment.

The strategy paper includes a set of recommendations which will be translated into action after endorsement by a national conference which will be held soon to address this issue.

Mr. Tubeishat, in his address, spoke about the problems facing the developing world, saying that poverty, lack of resources and the debt have a negative impact on the state of the environment in these countries.

New military education programme launched

AMMAN (Petra) — The Ministry of Education, in cooperation with the Peoples Army, launched a new programme of military education, under which female students in the first secondary class will receive military training at their schools.

The programme includes training on the use of arms, sport exercises, pedestrian activities, first aid and traffic awareness as well as national education on Jordan's history and its stands on both the pan-Arab and the international arenas.

The programme now covers 576 classes in 251 different schools belonging to the Ministry of Education. A similar military education programme was carried out in late October when male students attended similar classes as part of their national military education programme. The programme was launched in 1991 to train students at their schools on such activities as military training, sports, physical fitness, first aid and traffic awareness.

Before the launch of the programme, students were asked to join in special training courses outside class hours.

JOB OPPORTUNITY

The International Trade Centre UNCTAD/GATT (ITC) is seeking to recruit a National Project Coordinator (NPC) for its UNDP-financed project "Assistance for the Establishment of an Export Promotion Organisation, (JOR/92/002)" for a duration of one year (with possible extension).

The selected candidate will work under the supervision of the chief, office for Europe, Mediterranean and Middle East, Division of Technical Cooperation, and in close cooperation with the management of the Jordan Commercial Centres Corporation (JCCC). The NPC will carry out, among others, the following tasks:

- Outline, implement and follow-up the project work-plan in collaboration with ITC, JCCC and UNDP.
- Make all necessary administrative and logistic arrangements to facilitate successful implementation of technical advisory inputs and other project activities.
- Carry out studies to identify export market opportunities for Jordanian products.

QUALIFICATIONS:

The incumbent, who must be a Jordanian national, should hold a postgraduate degree in economics or business administration with at least five years work experience in international trade or business, and experience in trade promotion. Previous work with ITC will be an advantage. Good command of written and spoken English and Arabic is essential. Interested candidates should submit their detailed C.V.s in sealed envelopes, latest by Feb. 13, 1992, to the following address:

**U.N. Resident Representative
UNDP
P.O. Box 35286
Amman - Jordan
Re: Post of ITC National Project
Coordinator (JOR/92/002)**

FIS, Algerian security clash

tempered by "an adventure full of peril."

Clouds of tear gas swirled through the centre of Oran, in the west, choking off an attempt by demonstrators to gather. Security forces also fired warning shots to clear the crowd, drawn to the city's November 1 square after what APS called "inflamed passions" by a pro-FIS imam. Militants fled, but regrouped further away, APS added.

In Tlemcen, near the Moroccan frontier, FIS activists hurled stones and empty bottles at security forces before fleeing into side

alleys to escape teargas.

Algeria radio said similar unrest occurred in Tebessa in the far side of the country near the Tunisian border.

Other towns reporting trouble were Sidi Bel-Abbes and Medea, while in Annaba groups of youths threw stones at security forces, without drawing a response.

In Mostaganem several hundred FIS supporters chanted slogans demanding an Islamic state before dispersing without incident.

In Medea teargas and warning shots drove FIS militants back. Security forces imposed tight control on strategic points.

HOME NEWS IN BRIEF

Minister inspects storm damage

AMMAN (Petra) — Minister of Public Works and Housing Saad Hayel Al Surour Friday paid two visits to Jerash and Ajloun districts and inspected the conditions of roads following the snowfall and the heavy rainfall which led to the closure of some roads. Mr. Surour, who was accompanied by the ministry's secretary general and directors of Public Works Departments in Ajloun and Jerash, called on public works officials in the two departments to intensify their work and open the roads which are still closed and to make the necessary repairs for some roads, which were badly affected by the heavy downpour.

Students warned about universities

AMMAN (Petra) — The Ministry of Higher Education has warned students wishing to pursue their higher education abroad against dealing with some educational institutions which it said were not licensed in Jordan. Some offices and institutions used to place advertisements in local media informing Jordanian students of the availability of seats abroad. The ministry advised students to deal with offices licensed by the Ministry of Higher Education or to call at the university services offices at the Ministry for information on availability of university seats for them in the various universities.

JMA accredits graduates

AMMAN (Petra) — The Jordanian Medical Board has recently accredited a number of degrees awarded to Jordanian graduates from universities outside Jordan. The list included 14 post graduates in medicine.

Doctors' delegation leaves for Libya

AMMAN (J.T.) — A delegation representing the Arab Doctors Federation and the Arab Emergency Health Committee left Amman for Tripoli Wednesday to take part in a conference held to gather support for the Libyan people. The delegation comprises the federation's secretary general, Hassan Khreis, Vice president of the Jordanian Medical Association Jaafar Huneidi, member of the Arab Emergency Health Committee Ibrahim Abu Hameed and several JMA members.

Jordan Times

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Water, water... everywhere

THE "FREAK" weather conditions that characterised the country's climate this winter carried with it several blessings but also served as an eye opener. For years Jordan had been hoping and praying for rain to resolve its endemic water shortages. For this reason, Amman was among the early subscribers to the notion that regional discussions and agreements on the water issue should be accorded early priority. But when our prayers were answered and rain water poured into the country, the people and the government were caught off guard. The people manifested near panic in dealing with the severe weather conditions by stocking on food and fuel as if a war was imminent. However, long lines at petrol stations and in front of bakeries, in spite of the shortages and inconvenience it caused others, are not the problems which grossly affected the country during the snow storms. The real difficulties and possible disasters were created by the lack of futuristic thinking and planning which governed our policies towards maintaining and protecting the water we have. The flooding which hit agricultural land was caused by such lack of planning. Not only was the water capacity of our existing dams inadequate in face of any increase in water levels, but no alternative plans were made to store this water and prevent it from flooding agricultural lands and thus ruining much of the harvest of the year.

Early reports speak of no less than 26,000 dunams in areas of Jordan Valley which have been drowned in water that had to be released because one of our major dams could not cope with the amounts which poured into it during the past week. Farmers reject the theory that there was nothing that could be done and insist that if the authorities were properly prepared no such disasters would have taken place. Our concerned authorities, they say, have no excuse for pretending that they were caught off guard. The climate history of the country is full of examples where massive snow storms did occur and downpours followed. Furthermore, for years, water specialists studying our water storage systems have warned that we would continue to lose a big percentage of the water "we receive because of inefficiency in our system. Yet, and as we see now, much needed water reserves were wasted when they were left to stream down uselessly and aimlessly.

It is true that reports indicate that Jordan's natural and man-made water reservoirs have filled up to all-time highs, something that probably offsets the damage caused to the people and the national economy. But it does not write off our mistakes nor will it excuse us if another storm hits us and we are caught unprepared again.

When the weather goes back to "normal," the concerned authorities should take a more detailed stock of the pluses and minuses of the three snow blizzards which stormed the country. The obvious ones, like how our fragile and poorly-constructed streets have failed us in the face of the "unusual" winter conditions, call for early accounting. As a matter of fact, our streets and roads have never been able to cope with the most usual winter times because of their below-standard quality. The so-called "Gardens' Street" was revamped and reconstructed only last year only to be washed down the drain at the first instance of winter this year. Undoubtedly, the money spent on it and on other projects also went down the drain, just because we were either unprepared and failed to prepare ourselves adequately for such circumstances as we have witnessed recently.

Let us learn from the experiences of the past two months, and let us get over that famous phrase which says "Water, water everywhere, and not a drop to drink."

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

AL RA'I daily attacked Arab countries which still refuse to discuss the question of lifting sanctions on Iraq or easing the embargo so that the civilian population can get its food and medicine. These Arab countries have used the Arab League umbrella to declare their determination to maintain the embargo on the Iraqi people without any thought to the sick, the children and the women in need of medicine or food, said the paper. It said that one cannot blame these countries, not because they are enemies of the Iraqi people or used to be brothers and sisters to that people, but because these countries are taking instructions from Washington. But as long as the American troops with their barbaric aggression on Iraq have ensured the return of the Kuwaitis, one wonders what prevents the Arab people of the Gulf states, including Kuwait, from allowing the Arab League to discuss lifting of sanctions, the paper noted. It said that the Kuwaitis and their allies are afraid even to discuss such a question but they are indifferent to the fact that millions of their Arab brothers and sisters in Iraq are facing continuous suffering and death. The paper said that no one can even blame the United Nations because this organisation has been transformed into a tool in the hands of Washington, doing all the mischief to serve the neo-colonial powers' interests.

A columnist in Al Ra'i Arabic daily advocated the cause of the nurses employed by the Health Ministry who complained that they are deprived of the right to medical insurance scheme simply because they are female. Tareq Masarweh said he heard one of these women nurses airing her complaint through a call to the phone-in radio programme on Radio Jordan, and said that under the umbrella of democracy, it is difficult to imagine women not acquiring their rights on equal footing with men in the Kingdom. This woman nurse should have urged her colleagues to go on a strike in order to back their demands for fair and equal treatment and for an end of injustice to very important elements in the Jordanian society, said Masarweh. The writer said that such a right can be by no means anger the Islamists groups in Jordan. The Islamists would not oppose giving women their full rights because they accepted the Jordanian Constitution which advocates political pluralism and teaches fair treatment and equal opportunities for all citizens in socio-economic affairs.

Bush still seeking panacea for political woes

By Gene Gibbons
Reuter

WASHINGTON — Despite a new chief of staff and a freshly minted anti-recession plan, President George Bush is still having trouble getting his reelection bandwagon in gear.

This is illustrated by several opinion polls taken since his State of the Union speech last week, all of which suggest that the Republican president's proposals for growth failed to stop his political free-fall.

On top of that are signs of a continued split in his camp over election-year strategy, reflected in Housing Secretary Jack Kemp's comment on Saturday that some of Bush's proposed tax cuts are "gimmicks" that will not revitalise the U.S. economy.

Mr. Kemp "wants to run for office — in Japan, I think," White House spokesman Martin Fitzwater said on Monday, making it clear with his barbed quip that Bush is unhappy with the outspoken conservative cabinet member.

There are also rumblings about new White House Chief of Staff Sam Skinner's reorganisation efforts, which some Bush underlings say are promoting an impression of disarray.

Mr. Skinner, who replaced John Sununu as Mr. Bush's top aide in December, "is not taking hold like he should," one official complained.

He pointed to some false starts on staff changes and major last-minute revisions of Mr. Bush's speech last week.

Three individuals recruited for the post of White House communications director turned it down. Mr. Skinner finally had to ask Mr. Fitzwater to take on those additional duties.

Another change, which involved bringing Clayton Yeutter in as Mr. Bush's top domestic policy adviser and replacing him with Rich Bond as Republican Party chairman, came about only after arduous negotiations in which Mr. Skinner tried to placate presidential pals like Treasury Secretary Nicholas Brady.

These are not good signs for Mr. Bush just 15 days before the New Hampshire primary election, where he faces the challenge of right-wing pundit and "America first" proponent Pat Buchanan.

Mr. Buchanan is hammering away at a simple theme — that voters in New Hampshire should reject Mr. Bush because he violated the "read my lips, no new taxes" pledge that anchored his 1988 presidential campaign.

While polls show Mr. Buchanan falling far short of an upset win in the state, he is now backed by about 20 per cent of New Hampshire Republican voters. Many analysts say he could pull in 30 per cent or more by primary news conference in the state last week.

"What we have here is a contest for the soul and heart of the Republican Party," he told a day.

Such a strong showing would surely embarrass Mr. Bush and

news conference in the state last week.

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Such a strong showing would surely embarrass Mr. Bush and

of the advantage of being able to stay above the fray while Democratic candidates slug it out for their party's nomination to run in the November 3 general election.

A Time magazine/Cable News Network poll made public over the weekend put Mr. Bush's approval rating at 44 per cent — down from the 90 per cent he enjoyed after the Gulf war last year and his lowest level since he entered office in 1989.

This is not to say Mr. Bush is on the ropes: Richard Nixon's approval rating was at 49 per cent in January 1972 and he went on to win 49 of 50 states over George McGovern that November.

But Mr. Bush's State of the Union speech, which the White House had hallowed, has not provided the hoped-for burst of momentum.

Mr. Fitzwater said the polls show continued public concern over "the slow and flat and sluggish behaviour of the economy."

Mr. Bush ran into heavy political flak on Monday when he tried to talk up his recovery programme at a White House meeting with as many of the 50 state governors.

Some of the Democratic governors insisted that reporters who were brought into the meeting to hear the president's remarks be allowed to stick around to hear their responses.

Emphasising the so-called "fairness issue" with which the Democrats hope to recapture the presidency in November, they called for higher taxes on the rich than Mr. Bush prefers, and, echoing Mr. Kemp, chided him for proposing election-year gimmicks.

Mr. Fitzwater, who briefed reporters before the meeting, said the derided proposals would pump money into the economy.



Iraq seen having to accept U.N. oil export limits

By Youssef Azmeh
Reuter

ABU DHABI — President Saddam Hussein has no choice but to accept stiff U.N. conditions for limited Iraqi oil exports if he wants the cash to feed and care for his people, diplomats and oil sources in the Gulf have said.

They were commenting on Iraq's surprise decision on Tuesday to call off talks in Vienna with U.N. officials on resuming oil exports, blocked since its August 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

Iraq said conditions imposed by the United Nations Security Council last August were too

restrictive. They allow Iraq to sell \$1.6 billion worth of crude oil over a six-month period to pay for essential imports of food and medicine and to compensate those who suffered from the invasion.

"The conditions are very stiff but that is all there is on offer," one Western diplomat said.

Britain's Sir Harold Walker, ambassador to Iraq until the Gulf war a year ago, said there was no question of relaxing sanctions on Iraqi oil exports and accused Saddam Hussein of cynicism.

He told a Gulf business conference on Tuesday, shortly before Iraq announced it was boycotting

the Vienna talks, that Saddam Hussein was trying "to portray the U.N. as a cause of malnutrition and falling health standards in the hope that public opinion will force governments to abandon sanctions."

Baghdad was responsible for its own failure to take advantage of the U.N. mechanism to enable it to buy humanitarian supplies, he told the conference organised by the London-based weekly Middle East Economic Digest (MEED).

The diplomats said this view was shared by U.S. President George Bush who was determined to stand firm against any concessions to Iraq so long as Saddam

Hussein retained power. "In an election year, Bush has no interest in appeasing Saddam. The humanitarian argument just won't wash in Washington," one Western diplomat said.

Iraq's U.N. Ambassador Abdul Amir Al Anbani said on Tuesday Baghdad had withdrawn from the talks because the U.N. conditions made the production of Iraqi oil "a non-profitable enterprise and the Iraqi oil non-marketable."

The diplomats said the conditions that would have allowed Iraq to export some 500,000 barrels a day for six months were indeed tough and difficult to live

with. All the proceeds of the sales would have to be paid into a U.N. account of which just under one billion dollars would be available to pay, under strict U.N. supervision, for some of Iraq's humanitarian needs.

Iraq asked for amendments at a first round of talks with the U.N. in Vienna a month ago but the U.N. secretariat was unable to persuade the Security Council to accept alternatives, Mr. Anbani said.

Oil industry officials at the conference said Baghdad may be hoping that its oil may be vital to

keep world prices from rising too fast if there were a surge in oil demand.

But oil prices remained weak at about four dollar a barrel below the target price set by the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), with rising Kuwaiti oil exports adding that the current over-supply, they said.

Although oil prices gained on Tuesday after the Iraqi announcement, the industry sources said the economic recession in the West meant the rise was not likely to be sustained and prices would remain weak throughout 1992.

THE WEEK IN PRINT

It's time to harness nature, not be governed by it

Reviewed by Elia Nasralla

The snow storms that swept Jordan in January and February, the Non-Aligned Movement meeting in Cyprus, the George Habash episode in France and the continued threats to Libya were among the main topics given prominence in the local press over the past week.

In view of the heavy rain fall and snow, that helped fill the dams to the brim, and in light of the fact that millions of cubic metres of rain water are being lost, a columnist in Al Dustour urged the government to put into practice a plan for the construction of more dams in the country.

Jordan has been seeking the help of experts on water, holding seminars to find means of providing more water for the ever-increasing population and its needs and had been rationing the distribution of drinking water in the summer, at a time when many of the country's water problems could be solved through the erection of dams in a number of regions to trap the water for the dry season, said Mohammad Masalha. The writer urged the government to take immediate steps towards constructing the dams before the end of the present century when the Kingdom's population is expected to double and its industry and agriculture to become great water users.

A columnist in Al Ra'i daily criticised certain organisations, like the Electricity Company and the Telecommunications Corporation, for failing to take extra

precautions and for allowing disruptions in communications and basic services to the public.

Bader Abdul Haq said that members of the public are also to blame for the confusion on the roads, for ill preparing for the storm, like purchasing food and fuel supplies, and by tending to ignore warnings about driving or moving from low lying areas.

His colleague in Al Ra'i, Nazih, also criticised certain elements of the public who, he said, ignored all instructions about means of dealing with the storms and matters related to movement on the roads.

The writer said that while the Armed Forces and civil defence teams were busy trying to open roads, members of the public were creating chaos in some parts of the country by wandering out on roads covered with snow, queuing for bread and fuel or calling out for help from the civil defence men for matters that do not justify such emergency.

A columnist in Sawt Al Shaab paid tribute to the concerned agencies, like the civil defence, the Public Works Ministry and others, which, he said, exerted heroic efforts and were fully prepared for the mission of clearing the roads and dealing with emergencies.

Ahmad Al Dabbas said that reopening the roads was the main and most important mission since without transport and communications the country would have become paralysed and lifeless.

Sawt Al Shaab daily

turned its attention to the Non-Aligned Movement meeting held last week in Cyprus and said that in the wake of the recent world events and the collapse of the Soviet Union, the movement has to take serious steps to prove its stand and its influence.

This movement should embody the countries of Asia, Africa, Latin America and the former republics of the Soviet Union, Japan and China so that it can exercise a meaningful role in world events, said the daily.

In such a set up, the paper said, the Arab countries can play a leading role which is not possible now under the present so called new world order.

Its views are echoed by Al Dustour which said that with the absence of the superpower from the world's political scene the Non-Aligned Movement is called on to play a more influential role. The movement should group the majority of world nations wishing to have their voice heard after decades of being shelved in view of the dominating figures of the two superpowers, it said.

The Non-Aligned Movement can be facing a grave danger if its members do not concern their efforts to reaffirm their solid stand and prove they are able to rise to the level of challenges facing the world today, said Abdul Rahim Omar, a columnist in Al Ra'i daily.

The writer said that the Non-Aligned Movement should, for instance, back Japan's call for a change in the set up of the U.N. Security Council following the collapse of the Soviet Union, with Japan taking the seat of Britain for instance.

He said that the countries of the Third World which form

the Non-Aligned Movement could face the same danger that Iraq faced unless its members are solidly backing one another in confronting the repeated attempts of hegemony on the part of the United States and its allies.

A columnist in Al Ra'i daily strongly criticised the Arab League for taking a biased stand with regard to the embargo on Iraq, Mahmoud Al Rimawi said that by deciding against taking steps to alleviate the sufferings of the Iraqi people, the Arab League is deepening the differences among Arab states and perpetuating the rifts that had been separating the Arab people.

The writer said that one is not astounded to hear Washington announce its determination to maintain the embargo on Iraq, but it is rather shameful to hear Arabs wishing to follow suit and comply with the desires of the neo-colonialists.

The Arab League's stand was also criticised by Ahmad Al Mistleh in Al Ra'i who said that the Arab League Secretary General Ismat Abdul Ma'jeed was doing nothing to improve relations among Arab states or helping to end the suffering of the Iraqi people.

The writer said that the Arab League should take steps to end the Arab embargo, regardless of the United Nations position in this respect, because unless this is done, one cannot expect the outside world to come to the help of any Arab state as long as Arabs themselves do not help one another.

With the decision of the Arab League in mind, a columnist in Al Dustour said that the Arab order is bound to collapse and follow in the footsteps of the Soviet Union, simply because "nothing has been left to bind the Arabs together."

Munes Al Razzaz said that the Gulf war was the greatest

tragedy facing the Arabs since the 1948 war which shook the foundation of the Arab order, and it is regrettable to see the Arabs capitulating without even trying to defend themselves.

Turning to the threats against Libya, Saleh Al Qallab said in Al Dustour that all Arabs should rally behind Tripoli and defend the Libyan people in the face of aggression.

The writer said that all indications point to the fact that the U.S., France and Britain are preparing for an aggression on Libya and this time the Arabs should not stand by like they did in the aggression on Iraq.

For the time being, the Western nations are trying to impose sanctions on Libya and causing trouble to Tripoli through neighbouring Chad, he said.

But these steps are only preliminary and could pave the ground for an all out aggression, he added.

Mohammad Daoudieh said in Al Dustour that the Libyan people could be facing an aggression similar to that launched on Iraq.

In times of adversity Arabs should stick together and all Arabs must rally behind Libya, the writer said. Indeed the Libyans and the other Arab countries should eed the embargo on Iraq and should join hands with the Iraqis in aborting Western conspiracies on the Arab Nation.

Ahmad Al Mistleh, who writes in Al Ra'i, believed that the Western countries will direct their aggression on Syria after Libya and Iraq and could later attack Algeria.

The writer said that with Jordan besieged by the foreign naval ships, the Iraqis starving and the Palestinians suffering under occupation, and in view of the inability of any of the other Arab states, like Egypt and the Gulf countries, to

stand up and voice their opposition, it is expected that the threats against Libya are real and could be transformed into aggression sooner rather than later.

Most columnists and all editorials in the local press tackled the detention by the French of George Habash, the Palestinian leader, while seeking medical assistance in Paris.

What France did was part of the so-called new world order and part of an American policy imposed on the world, said Fakhri Kassar.

Writing in Al Ra'i daily, Kassar said that the American aggressive policy is not only directed against countries like Libya, Iraq and Cuba, but is now involving individuals considered dangerous to the new world order.

Munes Al Razzaz described the French act as an ambush and an immoral behaviour on the part of the French government. Writing in Al Dustour, Razzaz said that in its so-called war on terrorism, France should differentiate between freedom fighters and ordinary terrorists.

Ahmad Al Mistleh said France practiced state terrorism by detaining a freedom fighter and a leader of a people.

Writing in Al Ra'i, Mistleh said that the French committed the shameful act while the Arab people was thinking France could play a leading role in settling the Arab-Israeli conflict and bringing peace to the Palestinian people.

Saleh Al Qallab, who writes for Al Dustour, said France did well by releasing Dr. Habash and by refusing to succumb to Zionism's demand for handing him over to the Israeli authorities.

The writer said that although the Israelis have not achieved their goals, the Habash episode has helped world Zionism to create internal political trouble for the French government.

كنا من الامم

Against their will, rape and sexual abuse in custody

Following is a February 1992 report issued by Amnesty International.

JUST before midnight on May 18, 1990, a bus carrying 27 members of a family wedding party approached a roadblock manned by soldiers of the Border Security Forces (BSF) near Badagum village in Kashmir, India. As the bus rolled to a halt, the soldiers opened fire, killing the bridegroom's brother and wounding at least nine others, including the bride — 18-year-old Mubina Gani — and her husband. "We lay down under the seats and pretended to be dead," she said. "After the shooting they came inside and started to beat everyone." Some of the soldiers dragged the new bride and her heavily-pregnant aunt into a nearby field. "We were crying bitterly. I told them that I had not yet seen my husband. But they didn't listen. They took off our clothes... and then we were raped. Four to six men raped me, I think." Suffering from shock and gunshot wounds, Mubina Gani was taken away and held in military custody for 48 hours. Indian officials initially claimed that the bus had been hit by a stray bullet in cross-fire. However, the superintendent of the Anantnag police later confirmed that the BSF had fired on the bus indiscriminately and that the two women had been gang-raped. Four BSF soldiers were apparently suspended from duty, but no further legal disciplinary action appears to have been taken.

The most unusual thing about this incident is the fact that it has been publicly reported. In countries around the world, government agents use rape and sexual abuse to coerce, humiliate, punish and intimidate women. When a policeman or a soldier rapes a woman in his custody, that rape is no longer an act of private violence, but an act of torture or ill-treatment for which the state bears responsibility. International law obliges governments to protect all men, women and children from torture and ill-treatment, and requires that allegations of torture be promptly and impartially investigated. Thorough investigation and prosecution of those responsible sends a clear message that human rights violations will not be tolerated and that those who commit such acts will be held fully accountable.

Yet many governments persistently refuse to recognise that rape and sexual abuse by government agents are serious human rights violations; reports of rape are routinely ignored or inadequately investigated, and the perpetrators are seldom brought to justice. From the emergency zones of Peru, for instance, AI has received dozens of reports of members of the security forces raping women and girls. AI knows of no official investigations into such incidents since the state of emergency was first declared in October 1981 and the current government has not demonstrated the political will to institute such investigations. In 1986 a Peruvian prosecutor told an AI delegation in Ayacucho that rape was to be expected when troops were conducting counter-insurgency operations, and that prosecutions for such assaults were unlikely to happen.

Even when public outrage forces officials into conducting investigations and prosecutions, the punishments imposed by the

courts on government agents found guilty of rape are seldom commensurate with the enormity of the crime. In late 1989 a 30-year-old Indonesian widow was repeatedly raped by three police officers and one police auxiliary at the police station in Geumpang, Aceh. When the rape was reported to the people of her village they stormed the police station and were forcibly dispersed by soldiers from a local military command. The chief of police subsequently promised to investigate, and the three police officers were tried in a military court in June 1990. Two of them received seven-month sentences and were dismissed from the police force. The third officer was sentenced to one year, but was not dismissed from the force because he was about to retire.

Although men are sometimes raped in custody by government agents, it is a form of torture primarily directed against women, and to which women are uniquely vulnerable. Women are also more likely to suffer sexual abuse and harassment short of rape, including fondling, verbal humiliation, excessive body searches, and other intentionally degrading treatment. Even the threat of rape can be an effective weapon of psychological terror. The experience of being forced to contemplate the prospect of a violent and humiliating assault can be as terrifying and emotionally damaging as the attack itself.

When governments use military force to suppress armed insurgency movements, troops are often given extensive powers and are not held accountable to civilian legal authorities for their actions. In the course of counter-insurgency operations, government soldiers sometimes use rape and sexual abuse to try and extract information from women suspected of involvement with the armed opposition or even to punish women who simply live in areas known to be sympathetic to the insurgents. The indiscriminate use of torture and ill-treatment also helps create a permanent sense of fear and insecurity, against which the capacity for independent political action can be dulled or thwarted. The official failure to condemn or punish rape gives it an overt political sanction, which allows rape and other forms of torture and ill-treatment to become tools of military strategy.

Women's groups in the Philippines have documented cases of rape and sexual abuse of women detained during military operations. The victims have included human rights workers, members of legal political or social organisations thought by the military to be fronts for the armed opposition and villagers living in areas of suspected rebel activity. In December 1990, 21-year-old Cherry Mendoza and Cecilia Sanchez, aged 20, were arrested in a Bataan street by about 30 members of the Philippines Constabulary and the Philippines Army. The two women were searched and found to be carrying cigarettes and sweets; military officials later claimed these were provisions for the armed rebels. Soldiers took the women to a military camp in Morong. During interrogation sessions, Cherry Mendoza was beaten, sexually abused and possibly drugged. When she regained consciousness her body was sore and aching, her

trousers were undone and her underwear was stained with blood. She heard the soldiers laughing about how "Sir has scored on her." A medical examination nine days after her arrest indicated that her hymen and vagina had been severely lacerated. Cecilia Sanchez also alleged sexual abuse. The two women were held for four months on charges of subversion before being bailed. The Provincial Director of the Philippine National Police denied accusations of sexual abuse, and referred to Cherry Mendoza and Cecilia Sanchez as "communist terrorists," captured during a successful military operation. Cherry Mendoza has filed an official complaint about her treatment.

Soldiers of the National Resistance Army (NRA) of Uganda have raped women and girls while "screening" villagers suspected of supporting or sympathising with the rebels. Over a period of three days in April 1991, for instance, soldiers reportedly detained and interrogated villagers from all over the Gulu District. At least three men were extrajudicially executed, and a number of women, some of them elderly, were raped and beaten.

In India reports of army personnel raping women have become so persistent that the Assam High Court issued an order in March 1991 prohibiting soldiers from taking women to army camps for interrogation. In July 1991 India's Supreme Court ordered the army in the northeast to take special measures to protect women from torture and sexual harassment during army operations.

Women who are political activists, community organisers, or human rights workers have been targeted because they are strong. Soldiers and policemen use rape or sexual abuse to humiliate these women and sometimes to punish them for their political or social independence. Eva Judith Galvez, a Guatemalan trade unionist, was abducted in May 1991. She was taken to a clandestine detention centre and questioned about her association with two other trade unionists — Dinora Pérez Valdez, who had been murdered in Guatemala City in April, apparently by government agents, and Irene Diéguez. When Eva Galvez denied knowing the two women she was beaten, stripped-naked and subjected to physical sexual abuse. She was kept naked throughout her interrogation. "One of them began playing with me," she recounted. "He said that they would all have me if I didn't tell them what I knew... I began to cry and told him that I didn't know anything." Eva Galvez was released near Guatemala City. Fearing further arrest and ill-treatment, she fled the country and has now been given asylum in Canada.

Maria Nicolaïdou was among 33 young men and women detained in Athens, Greece on Nov. 2, 1991, after policemen found them sticking up political posters. The detainees were taken to a police station, where all 12 of the women were ordered to strip naked and were kept in an open room in full view of a number of policemen, who made obscene gestures and comments. Several of the women said they were beaten by police officers. Although Maria Nicolaïdou informed the police officers that she was three months' pregnant, she says: "They did not hesitate

to hit me on the head.... A senior officer... grabbed me by the hair and beat my head against the wall... insulting me with words such as whore and tramp." Newspaper reports described her as "extensively bruised" when she appeared in court on Nov. 5. On November 13, the 33 were sentenced to six months' imprisonment on charges including the illegal posting of bills and "verbal abuse." Fifteen of the detainees have filed a suit against the police for bodily harm and abuse.

In many countries policemen use sexual harassment and threats of rape as an interrogation tactic. The interrogators may be after something specific, like information or a signature on a confession, or they may simply want to frighten the victim and other local women. Rose Ann Maguire was arrested in July 1991 in Northern Ireland and held for five days in Castlereagh interrogation centre. During questioning sessions, she was reportedly sexually harassed, physically abused and threatened with death. She said that on one occasion a detective slapped her, pulled her by the hair, touched her breasts and put his hand between her legs. "They were just trying to degrade you all the time," she said. Rose Ann Maguire was released without charge. At least three other young women interrogated at Castlereagh in 1991 have reported incidents of sexual harassment.

Dozens of Palestinian women and girls detained in the Israeli occupied territories have reportedly been sexually abused or threatened in sexually explicit language during interrogation. Fatimah Salameh was arrested near Nabulus in July 1990. Her interrogators allegedly threatened to rape her with a chair leg and told her they would photograph her naked and show the pictures to her family. "They called me a whore and said that a million men had slept with me," she said. Fatimah Salameh agreed to confess to membership and participation in an illegal organisation and was sentenced to 14 months' imprisonment. Seventy-year-old Wadiah 'Abdul Hafez Al Shubaki was starting her pilgrimage to Mecca when she was detained at the border with Jordan. The elderly woman was stripped naked and body searched before being moved to the "Russian Compound," a police detention centre in Jerusalem. She said she was held in solitary confinement for seven days and that she was repeatedly beaten while interrogators made sexually explicit and humiliating remarks to her. She was later

released without charge.

Although more than 30 cases of torture have been reported in Chile since the civilian government took power nearly two years ago, the alleged perpetrators have not been brought to justice. Some of these reports include allegations of sexual abuse and rape. Ester Alfaro Gonzalez, arrested by the Carabineros in September 1990, was taken to a police station in Santiago. She later testified to being bound, beaten and blindfolded before her interrogators raped her. "I heard them laughing then," she said. She was forced to remain standing and was deprived of sleep for several days before being transferred to Santo Domingo Prison.

In Turkey rape and sexual abuse are frequently used in attempts to extract confessions from both men and women during interrogation. Günyay Korkut, a 20-year-old Turkish university student, was arrested in May 1991. She was blindfolded and taken to Adana Police Headquarters, where she was accused of complicity in the murder of Brigadier Temel Cingöz, regional commander of the gendarmerie. Over the course of her first week in captivity, she said she was repeatedly stripped, hung up by her wrists with leather straps, tortured with electric shocks and sexually molested. "I told the police that I was only a member in a legal student association.... They told me that only militant political students joined the association." When Günyay Korkut continued to deny their accusations her interrogators laid her naked on blocks of ice and applied electric shocks to her feet, breasts and genitals. She said she eventually fainted, and when she revived she noticed blood coming from her vagina. Her interrogators later told her that she "was no longer a virgin." Four days later, when they threatened to repeat the torture, Günyay Korkut signed a prepared confession, which she said she was not allowed to read. She spent a total of 16 days in police custody before being committed to prison.

On Aug. 5, the Malaysia State Security Court ordered her release, but her trial continued. Günyay Korkut filed a formal complaint about her torture, which was passed to the local civil administration for evaluation. Some women are raped or sexually abused because they happen to be the wives, mother, daughters or sisters of men the authorities cannot capture. These women become substitutes for the men in their families, and government agents torture and

abuse them to punish and shame their male relatives or to coerce these men into surrendering.

In Bangladesh tribal women in the Chittagong Hill Tracts have been raped by members of the security forces in apparent reprisal attacks against the men of the community, some of whom are active in armed movements for regional autonomy. A 17-year-old girl from the village of Baghaichair was brutally raped because her brother was suspected of being a political activist. The girl recognised one of her attackers, a lieutenant. "He raped me, followed by another soldier," she said. "Each one raped me twice. The lieutenant said to me that he was also going to rape my sister-in-law and that was the price we were to pay for my brother's activities. Later I went inside the house and found my sister-in-law bruised and unconscious. They found her and two of them raped her."

In the Casamance region of Senegal women have been tortured because of their relationship to suspected members of the independence movement, which was active until a peace agreement was reached in May 1991. In June 1990, for instance, soldiers searched the village of Kabiline for Tata Sadio, a suspected member of the Casamance Democratic Forces. When they were unable to find him they arrested his pregnant wife Binta Niassy. The soldiers forced her to lie face down in any army truck while they stood on top of her and beat her with rubber whips. She was released without charge but suffered a miscarriage several days later.

Pregnant women who are tortured or held in inhumane conditions face the additional threat of suffering miscarriage or permanent injury. The special needs of pregnant women are recognised in international instruments such as the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners. Some governments not only ignore these needs, but take advantage of the vulnerability of pregnant women to inflict severe physical and emotional pain.

Wafa' Murtaida was a 27-year-old civil engineer nearly nine months pregnant when the Syrian authorities arrested her in September 1987. The authorities apparently suspected her husband, Yahya Murtaida, of belonging to a banned opposition group and tried to extract the names of his associates from her through torture. Wafa' Murtaida gave birth in prison and lost her child, apparently because of the torture. She was held without charge

or trial until her recent release from Fara' Falastin detention centre in Damascus.

In Mexico two pregnant women were among 15 members of the Trapuato Popular Settlements Union, an organisation prominent in the defence of peasants' land rights, who were detained without warrants by the public security police in January 1990. Both women said they were beaten on the stomach in custody and one of them, Amalia Chávez Negrete, reportedly miscarried as a result. One of the other women was partially undressed and pushed out into the street in her underwear. All of the women were reportedly threatened with rape.

Some governments pursue policies that result in persistent human rights violations against people of particular ethnic or national origin. Indigenous peoples, who are often denied civil and political rights, have little recourse against the governments that allow these violations to occur. Those who work on their behalf have also been attacked. Sister Diana Ortiz, a Roman Catholic nun from the United States of America, went to San Miguel, Guatemala in 1987 because "it was an indigenous community and the indigenous people of Guatemala have suffered the most." Over the next two years she received a series of death threats related to her work in the community. On Nov. 2, 1989, two men abducted her from the garden of a religious retreat in Antigua and turned her over to uniformed police officers driving an official police car. Sister Ortiz was blindfolded and taken to a warehouse near Guatemala City. For the next 12 hours she was questioned, beaten, burned with cigarettes over 100 times on the back and breasts, raped and sexually abused in ways she later referred to as "too horrible to describe." Sister Mary Ballard, who worked with Sister Ortiz in the indigenous community of San Miguel, later said "There's not one single family up there that doesn't have members either 'disappeared' or killed. The fact that Diana was kidnapped, tortured and raped is unusual only because she's still alive... I think the message they're sending to the church is clear: don't help the indigenous, don't help the poor."

All government agents who encourage, condone or participate in the rape of women in their custody should be brought to justice. Yet many of the perpetrators go free because their victims are too terrified or ashamed to file a complaint. Some women try to obliterate the memory of the assault: others feel degraded and fear that they would be shunned or abandoned if they reveal what has been done to them. In some traditional societies raped women are thought to be tainted or defiled, and the economic and social pressures to conceal a rape can be considerable: if a married woman is raped, her husband may exercise his right to desert her; a single woman who has been raped may no longer be seen as fit for marriage. The mother of two young women raped by soldiers in India asked afterwards: "What man will marry them now (that their lives have been ruined)?"

Many rape victims are threatened with additional violence if they complain to anyone about the attack. In September 1990 21-year-old Amanda Guerra López, Lester Mozombite Cartagena, aged 23, and three teenagers — two boys and a 15-year-old girl — were ordered to get out of a bus by an army lieutenant at a checkpoint near the Km. 80 military base on the Federico Basadre Highway in Peru. The five were taken into the base where the teenagers were separated from the adults. Amanda Guerra López was reportedly raped and beaten before she and Lester Mozombite were "disappeared." The 15-year-old girl said she was raped by eight soldiers, and she and the two boys were beaten. The three teenagers were released four days later, after being threatened with death if they reported the incident. They are still too frightened to have their names made public. The authorities denied any knowledge of the detentions and have apparently refused to open an independent judicial inquiry into the allegations of rape and "disappearance."

A 40-year-old tribal woman, raped by Bangladeshi government soldiers as they raided her village in the Chittagong Hill Tracts in 1989 said: "The soldiers said they were going to teach us a lesson. While some pinned us down the others raped us. We had already heard the sounds of bullets and the screams of our men being beaten up. So we did not have any courage to protest and had to meekly surrender to the torture."

Many women believe it futile to pursue rape complaints against the police or military, since the authorities who condone such abuses are unlikely to take energetic action to punish the perpetrators. In the Philippines in January 1991 three soldiers reportedly held 14-year-old Julie An de la Vega in a bunker near Malibong, Abra, while they took turns raping her. The girl recognised the rapists and filed a criminal complaint at the Office of the Provincial Prosecutor. Although witness statements and a medical report supported her rape allegations, no action has been taken against Julie-An de la Vega's attackers.

And some governments maintain legislation making it possible for the victims of rape to be charged with criminal offences. Under Pakistan's Hudood Ordinance, women convicted of extramarital sexual relations — including rape and adultery — can be sentenced to be publicly whipped, imprisoned or stoned to death. In August 1989 two nurses were raped at gunpoint by three interns in a Karachi hospital. One of the victims tried to file a complaint and was herself charged with admitting to sexual intercourse. As a result of the charges she has lost her job and her marital engagement has been broken off. "No one else can ever know how I feel inside," she said. "I may seem all right on the outside but inside I feel as if I no longer exist."

Through their failure to institute adequate investigations, prosecutions and procedural safeguards, governments around the world bear full responsibility for the persistence of widespread rape and sexual abuse in custody. Women are entitled to the protection of their fundamental human rights. But many governments clearly regard rape and sexual assault as less serious offences than other human rights violations. This is a particularly frightening prospect when the perpetrators of these rapes are those same policemen and military personnel charged with the protection of the public. □

Shamir not obligated by Camp David

(Continued from page 1)

territories.

But his spokesman, Ehud Gol, explained that the four-year Palestinian revolt against Israeli rule in the occupied territories did not exist when the Camp David accords were signed.

"So now we have to prepare ourselves security-wise," Mr. Gol said.

That suggested Israel might resist the Camp David section urging it to withdraw troops from populated Arab areas in the territories it occupied in the 1967 war.

The biggest change in the territories since Camp David is the growth of Jewish settlements. In 1978, about 7,300 Israelis lived in

the enclaves on occupied land. Now, an estimated 115,000 live in more than 140 settlements.

Egypt, meanwhile, believes that the 1978 Camp David accords on Palestinian self-rule are out-of-date and prefers to stick to rules of the current Arab-Israeli peace talks, an official Egyptian source said on Friday.

The Camp David accords are not on the negotiating table now. What is on the table is the implementation of Security Council resolutions on the basis of land for peace," the source said.

The Egyptian official was echoing repeated remarks made by President Hosni Mubarak that the Camp David agreements on the Palestinian issue were outdated.

Europeans sign

(Continued from page 1)

kered the deal last December.

"Satisfaction at what has been achieved, and hope for what the future may bring," he said.

The 189-page treaty plus scores of declarations and protocols is a blueprint for achieving a single currency in some EC states by 1999 at the latest. It would hand new powers to the European Parliament, strengthen foreign and security ties and give the EC a common defence role.

"The EC is now on an irrevocable course towards European union," said Egon Klepsch, president of the European Parliament.

Foreign and finance ministers from the 12 countries signed the accord.

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Jordan Times

JORDAN MARKET PLACE

Circus, ceremony to mark start of Winter Olympics

ALBERTVILLE (R) — Circus spectacle and the wail of Alpine horns mark the opening of the Albertville Olympics Saturday, raising the curtain on the greatest winter sports show on earth.

Organisers are promising a breathtaking opening ceremony to fit the games' billing as the biggest ever Winter Olympics.

Athletes from a record 64 nations, some new and others back for the first time in memory after the end of the cold war, will be treated to a two-hour spectacle that will mix mimicry of their sports with the daredevil stunts of the circus.

Hman mobiles suspended from cranes will dangle 30 metres above Albertville's ceremonial stadium, where trapeze artists, trampolines, jugglers and dancers on skates and skis will entertain a crowd of 33,000.

Two billion people are expected to watch on television as French President Francois Mitterrand opens the games to a fanfare of 12 giant Alpine horns after a fly-past by military jets trailing smoke in the colours of the Olympic rings.

The Olympic flame will be lit from a distance by a torch bearer

who will ignite a ball of fire which will sizzle along a cable to a bowl just outside the stadium.

The identity of the French torch bearer is meant to be the most closely guarded secret of the open-air evening ceremony, staged against the soaring natural backdrop of the Savoie Alps.

But the confident tip is for Alpine skier Nathalie Bouvier, downhill silver medalist at last year's World Championships.

She would have been one of France's main Olympic hopes but broke both legs in Japan a year ago and has not competed since.

Names that spell artistry, glamour and glory will be in the parade of more than 2,000 athletes at the 16-day games.

Alberto Tomba, slalom and giant slalom winner at Calgary four years ago, will carry Italy's flag and then bid to be the first successful defending champion in Olympic Alpine skiing.

Toni Nieminen of Finland hopes also to make history, eyeing triumph at just 16 in Sunday's normal hill ski jump to become the youngest male gold medalist at a winter games.

The new nations of Croatia and

Slovenia will compete for the first time alongside the Baltic states which came and went and are now back again — Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

The games will show whether the Russian-dominated team from the new Commonwealth of Independent States can emulate the defunct Soviet Union, winners of the most medals in Calgary.

Or will Germany become the new medal machine, oiled for a gold rush with its first unified team at an Olympics since 1964?

Others will be at the games simply to say they were there — among them sunshine athletes from Honduras, Bermuda, Jamaica and Swaziland.

The French will be hoping for a hero to follow the great Jean-Claude Killy, winner of three Alpine skiing golds the last time France staged a Winter Olympics at Grenoble in 1968.

And Killy, now co-chairman of the Albertville organisers, will be hoping the weather, the biggest threat to the success of an Olympics spread across 10 different venues in a huge area of Alps, will smile on the games.

Samaranch buries original Olympic ideal

LA LECHERE (R) — The original Olympic ideal that taking part was more important than winning was formally buried by Juan Antonio Samaranch Friday on the eve of the Albertville Winter Olympic Games.

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) president told a news conference that competitors would have to meet strict qualifying standards to gain a place at the 1996 centenary games in Atlanta.

"We will adopt a quota for each sport. This may mean some smaller national Olympic committees (NOCs) will not be able to send their athletes to the games," he said.

"We don't want any athletes coming in five laps after the rest. That is finished."

The elimination of the no-hope competitors will be seen as a significant step in Samaranch's modernisation of the Olympic movement.

In the 12 years since he took power, he has steered the Olympics away from their amateur, conservative past to embrace both elite professionalism and commercialism.

The IOC president said he wanted continental championships and similar competitions to serve as pre-Olympic qualifying contests.

But he said countries whose athletes were sub-standard would still be able to send up to three NOC officials to the opening ceremony of the games.

Mr. Samaranch said the explosion in the number of countries taking part, caused by the break-up of the Soviet Union and other political developments, was one of the main reasons for imposing restrictions.

He said the IOC wanted to maintain a ceiling of 10,000 to 15,000 athletes in the summer games.

In Atlanta we are faced with the possibility of having more than 190 NOCs taking part, maybe nearly 200," he said.

Despite the sudden increase, Samaranch said the IOC would ease recognition of new countries wherever possible.

"We will not close the doors. We will not punish athletes," he said.

He said the IOC might grant provisional Olympic recognition to some of the republics of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) at a meeting in Switzerland on March 9.

Samaranch and his four vice-presidents will meet representatives of the 12 ex-Soviet republics at the IOC's Lausanne headquarters.

But the IOC president said the talks would be aimed at the participation of a united CIS team in Barcelona, as in Albertville where five of the republics will compete together under the Olympic flag.

SPORTS NEWS IN BRIEF

Jordan Cup final postponed

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Jordan Cup final between Al Ramtha and Al Wihdat, which was set for Friday Feb. 7, was again postponed. The Jordan Soccer Federation (JSF) decided to postpone the match until Feb. 21 as snow was still covering the stadium at Al Hussein Youth City. Meanwhile the JSF announced that it will set the match schedules for all 1992 soccer competitions this week, and will soon name 1991's best players.

'No blood testing at Albertville'

LA LECHERE, France (AP) — IOC President Juan Antonio Samaranch Friday ruled out blood testing at the Albertville winter games, a prospect that had divided the IOC and alarmed some teams. Samaranch said at a news conference that blood testing has not yet been approved by the IOC executive board, and therefore will not be used in Albertville. The head of the IOC's Medical Commission, Prince Alexandre de Merode, had insisted this week that a reliable blood test was ready and could be put into practice here on a moment's notice. Other IOC officials had disputed Prince de Merode's comments, saying blood tests needed further study and wouldn't be used until the summer games in Barcelona at the earliest.

Sukova beats Sawamatsu in Japan

AMAGASAKI, Japan (AP) — Second-seeded Helena Sukova of Czechoslovakia, firing 15 service aces, beat Japan's Naoko Sawamatsu Friday in full sets to advance into the semifinals of the Mizuno World Ladies Tennis Tournament. Sukova posted a 6-1, 5-7, 6-2 victory over Sawamatsu in the quarterfinal match of the artificial court of Amagasaki City Memorial Park Sogo Gym in western Japan. Third-seeded Laura Gildemeister of Peru made short work of Japan's Yone Kario, scoring a 6-1, 6-2 triumph in less than an hour and fourth-seeded Kimiko Date of Japan, ranked 25th in the world, routed fifth-seeded Rachel McQuillan of Australia 6-3, 6-2 in other quarterfinals. Carina Habendova of Czechoslovakia romped over Japan's Kuniko Okamoto 6-0, 6-1 in just 50 minutes. Habendova meets Gildemeister and Sukova plays Date in the semifinals Saturday.

Courier meets Masur in San Francisco

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — Two tough matches — one won and one lost — was enough for Jimmy Connors to declare 1992 off to a solid start. Having climbed back into the upper echelon of men's tennis at age 39, Jimmy Connors is excited about attacking the game again at full speed ahead, even after losing to Wally Masur of Australia in the second round of the Volvo San Francisco Tennis Tournament Thursday night. In the last game Thursday, Jim Courier beat Jason Stoltenberg of Australia 7-5, 6-4. "I've been playing, working, training, doing what it takes," Connors said after falling 7-6, 4-6, 6-3 to Masur in a second-round match that lasted more than three hours. "But if this was practice, I would have said after the second set, 'nice workout.' I came in here in what I thought was good shape, and I'm going out exhausted. I had my chances. For my first tournament, I'm very happy. I can play better. I will play better."

Tyson billboard defaced

CATSKILL, New York (AP) — Mike Tyson has lost face in his adopted hometown. First someone spray-painted negative graffiti on a billboard honouring the former heavyweight champion. Now the billboard has been taken down altogether. "Rather than have that much of a controversy, I decided to have it torn down this morning," said Jimmy Gjerjig Thursday. He's a bar and restaurant owner who put the billboard up on the outskirts of Catskill about five years ago. Village police discovered early Wednesday that the billboard had been defaced with graffiti referring to Tyson's rape trial in Indianapolis. The word "champion" was covered in black paint and replaced with "scound" and "winner" was replaced with "loser." The words "rapist" and "we demand justice" were also sprayed onto the sign.

Cantona in French team for friendly

PARIS (R) — Temperamental striker Eric Cantona, who moved to English League leaders Leeds United this week, was Friday included in France's team to play England in a soccer friendly at Wembley on Feb. 19. France's manager Michel Platini picked Cantona to join Jean-Pierre Papin of Marseille and Pascal Vahirua of Auxerre in attack. Cantona, who was barred from the French national squad for 10 months last year after insulting former trainer Henri Michel, threatened to quit soccer after being suspended by the French League in December. He has scored 18 goals in 20 international appearances. Vahirua has been out of league soccer for two weeks with a pulled groin muscle but should be fit in time for Wembley. Regular goalkeeper Bruno Martini, however, is still out of action after surgery on an ankle and will be replaced by Lyon's Gilles Rousset.

Cantona looks for Leeds debut

LONDON (R) — French international striker Eric Cantona looks set for an immediate first team debut with English League leaders Leeds United Saturday.

Although manager Howard Wilkinson has doggedly refused all week to say whether Cantona will make his debut at Oldham, the Frenchman was pulled out of a scheduled reserve team appearance at the last minute Wednesday without any explanation.

Wilkinson may be reluctant to change a wingman team, but is expected to find a place for player he signed on loan from Nimes last weekend as a substitute.

Leeds, who head Manchester United on goal difference at the top of the first division, may be forced to make one change if defender Mel Sterland, who has played 33 consecutive matches, fails to recover from an ankle injury.

Manchester United manager Alex Ferguson hinted that he may recall dropped Welsh striker Mark Hughes for Saturday's difficult match against fifth placed Sheffield Wednesday.

"Hughes is one of the best players in the history of Manchester United, but he has not been scoring enough goals."

"Maybe leaving him out was the kick up the backside he needed."

Hughes was dropped for Wednesday's F.A. Cup defeat by Southampton.

Liverpool, whose defeat at home to Chelsea last week set back their recently-rivaled championship hopes, could be without inspirational Danish midfielder Jan Molby for the visit to Coventry after he picked up a knee injury in Wednesday night's F.A. Cup draw with Bristol Rovers.

Steve Nicol and Michael Thomas, who both missed that match, are ruled out against with thigh and hamstring injuries respectively.

Tottenham Hotspur's Scottish

striker Gordon Durie wants to return home and has asked the club for a transfer, according to newspaper reports Friday.

Durie, signed from Chelsea at the start of the season, has formed an impressive partnership with England striker Gary Lineker which has produced 30 goals this season.

But he has become unsettled in London and fears his game may begin to suffer.

Glasgow Celtic completed an exchange deal with Chelsea Thursday night involving Tommy Boyd returning to Scotland and Irish international Tony Cascarino moving to the London club.

Scottish international defender Boyd spent just eight months with Chelsea after moving from Motherwell last summer while Cascarino failed to make an impact in his brief spell at Celtic.

Struggling second division Newcastle United are expecting a full house of more than 30,000 for Saturday's game against Bristol City to welcome the return of former player Kevin Keegan as Manager.

"Less than an hour after the news of Kevin Keegan's appointment breaking, we had supporters buying tickets for the rest of the season. Just about every telephone call we have received has been for the ticket office," said a club official.

Keegan landed his first job as a soccer manager when Newcastle dismissed Argentine Osvaldo Ardiles and named him as replacement.

The shock announcement came just three days after Ardiles, a World Cup winner with Argentina in 1978, was reassured by owner and Chairman Sir John Hall that his job was safe.

"Let's kill off once and for all the rumours that his job as manager is on the line," Sir John was quoted as saying Sunday.

Keegan, 40, who won the European Cup with both Liver-

pool and Hamburg, has been out of the game since retiring in 1984 after helping Newcastle return to the first division.

Newcastle, a club steeped in history with four first division titles and six F.A. Cup triumphs, returned to the second division in 1989.

Their debts are estimated at £4 million (\$7.2 million) and they have had to sell England international Peter Beardsley, Chris Waddle and Paul Gascoigne in recent years.

They recruited former Tottenham midfielder Ardiles last season from second division Swindon, where he was a great success as manager, hoping for a prompt return to the top flight.

But Newcastle have won only six of their 30 league games this season and lie second from bottom of the table.

They crashed 5-2 to bottom club Oxford Saturday, a result that increased the fear they might drop into the third division for the first time.

Keegan, twice European Footballer of the Year, will bring to his first managerial job a wealth of experience as a player, including 63 England caps.

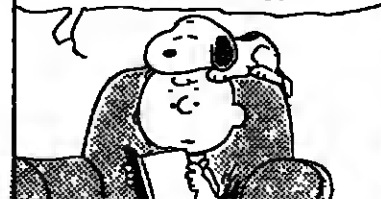
"This is the only managerial job I have ever wanted," Keegan told a news conference. "We'll turn this club around. It will go back where it belongs."

"Newcastle United have tremendous potential but that is only any good if you realise it." Ardiles had no idea he was to be ousted until Wednesday morning.

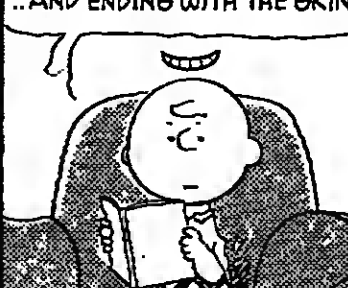
Sir John, who took over the chair last year and claims to have pumped £5 million (\$9 million) of his own money into the club, told a Sunday newspaper that Ardiles' job was safe, even if Newcastle were relegated.

Peanuts

"ALL RIGHT," SAID THE CAT, AND THIS TIME IT VANISHED QUITE SLOWLY BEGINNING WITH THE END OF THE TAIL...



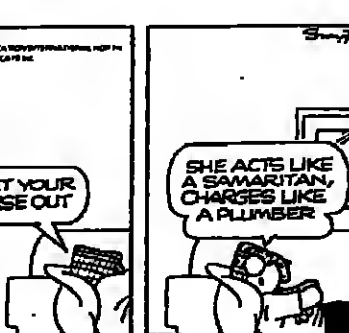
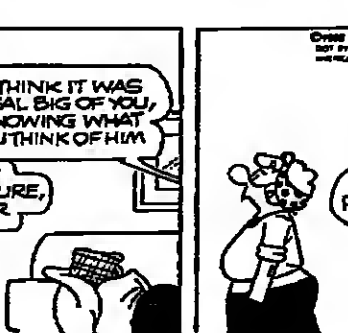
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Andy Capp



Mutt'n'Jeff



HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR SATURDAY FEBRUARY 8, 1992

By Thomas S. Pierson, Astrologer, Carroll Righter Foundation

GENERAL TENDENCIES: Fixed changes are likely through out today's activities so don't get involved in plans that you won't be able to change without getting a lot of associates upset or out of joint.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) A private matter can be successfully solved very early but you have obstacles in the way of getting off to new pursuits; tonight you find some pleasures.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) You now find that a good friend will do what you wish early to make life smoother but later you mate will make some demands that are difficult.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Tasks should flow smoothly if commenced very early in the day but then expect some interruptions that make it difficult to do what is expected.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) Make an appointment early for the fun you like the best tonight then be prepared to put much effort into making your talents more useable.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Find out just what you mate wants you to do tonight and arrange early to arrange such while during the daytime you find recreations very enjoyable.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Send a message that gives one a new will to go on after breakfast,

then you will find that the day presents some problems in communicating with others.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) You can successfully handle a practical matter early but then do not try to contact those who are older or who have a depressing effect on you.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Do what you want to make headway very early but then you need to use particular care that you do not get involved over your head in a money matter.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Matters in your residence can be well handled early in the day but later make sure you rise above a feeling you are not getting ahead fast enough.

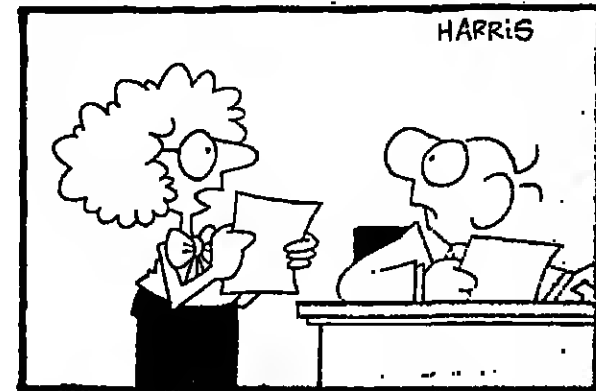
CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Put yourself early in a position to get out and do errands and shopping for later some private matters will require your undivided attention.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) After breakfast get into your material concerns and they are easily solved but later avoid a time wasting friend; tonight do what you do enjoy.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Consider well the various personal goals you have in mind early, make progress to gain them, then avoid some friction in the world of action.

THE BETTER HALF

By Harris



"You got a fax from your wife. It just says 'Grrrrrr'!"

JUMBLE

THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME by Henri Arnold and Bob Lee

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

CADYE

FECOR

HYLOW

DRUGIT



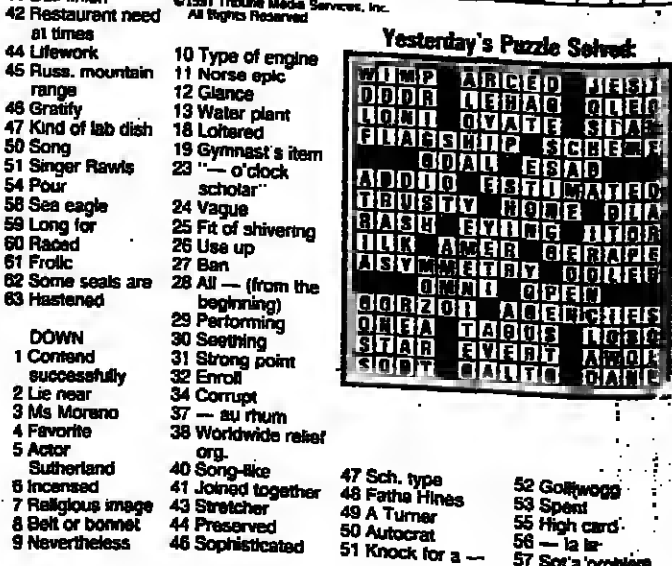
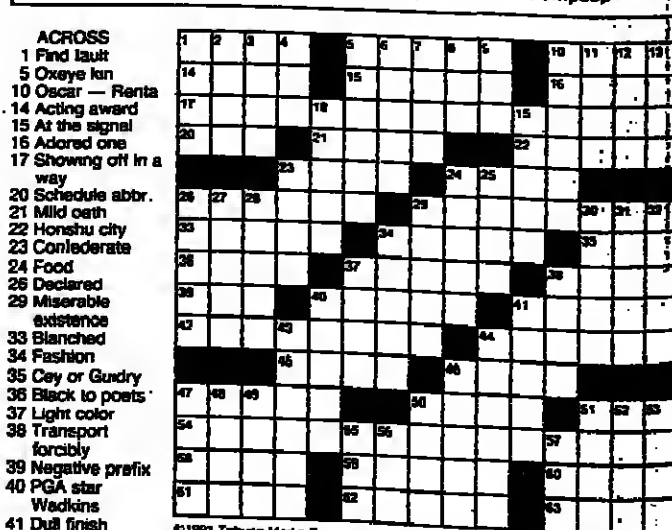
AS GUESTS GO, YOU MIGHT WISH THIS.

Print answer here: _____

Yesterday's Jumbles: CUBIC THYME DAHLIA BABOON

Answer: What you can't drop without breaking it — A BAD HABIT

THE Daily Crossword by Bruce W. Thompson



Aquino orders spending cuts

MANILA (R) — Philippine President Corason Aquino has ordered government agencies and corporations to limit spending and defer non-essential projects in order to meet targets agreed with the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Mrs. Aquino said in an administrative order there was a need for government "to maintain prudence in spending and to continue to streamline its operations in view of limited resources."

The Philippines in 1992 is committed to a public sector deficit equivalent to 2.7 per cent of gross national product under a stabilization programme agreed with the IMF.

The programme, which curbs spending and increases govern-

ment revenues, is still awaiting final approval by the IMF board pending the senate's passage of new tax-raising measures.

"The delay in the approval of these measures is exacerbating government deficits," the newly-elected president of the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry said in a statement.

Finance Secretary Jesus Estanislao said the government would cut spending to maintain the target deficit in the event that no new taxes were approved.

The consolidated public sector deficit for 1992 is put at 37.7 billion pesos (\$1.3 billion).

Mrs. Aquino ordered government institutions to set aside 10 per cent of their budget as reserves, to be released only with



Corason Aquino

her approval.

She also ordered all new non-infrastructure projects for 1992 to be deferred except hospital and school buildings and projects "related to rehabilitation, reconstruction and other works for disaster-stricken areas."

Tunisian financial picture brightens

TUNIS (R) — Tunisia is in good financial health despite fears a year ago that the Gulf war would damage its economy, Finance Minister Mohammad Ghanouchi has said.

Tunisia's foreign exchange reserves almost doubled last year, rising from \$350 million in May to \$690 million by Dec. 31, Mr. Ghanouchi said in an interview.

"That represents 50 days of imports or slightly more than at the end of 1990," the minister told Reuters.

The 1991 balance of payments deficit, originally forecast at about \$700 million, would not be more than \$350 million, or four per cent of gross national product (GNP).

Mr. Ghanouchi said gross domestic product (GDP) had risen by 3.5 per cent in real terms, a vast improvement on original



Mohammad Ghanouchi

forecasts which projected zero growth.

He said the improved financial picture was due mainly to a record cereal crop of 2.4 million tonnes, a better-than-expected tourism season, an influx of capital, and the positive effects of the government's economic adjustment measures last year.

Exports grew last year by 11 per cent compared to 1990 while imports fell by 0.8 per cent, Mr. Ghanouchi said.

He added that income from tourism was estimated at about \$680 million.

"These encouraging results enable Tunisia to consolidate and continue with economic reforms," the minister said.

Since 1986 Tunisia has been

applying a structural adjustment programme approved by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund to liberalise trade and correct imbalances.

Mr. Ghanouchi said that in recent months Tunisia had obtained \$700 million in long-term loans at concessionary rates which he said indicated renewed confidence in Tunisia.

The loans include \$250 million from the World Bank for economic and financial reforms as part of the structural adjustment programme.

Other loans were provided by the African Development Bank, the European Community, Italy and France.

Mr. Ghanouchi said that during the current year reforms

would continue with reorganisation of the banking and insurance sectors in order to liberalise the financial market and boost exports.

The minister said the Tunisian dinar appeared to be holding its own against the currencies of main trading partners France, Italy and Germany, and last year fluctuations in exchange rates were limited to one or two per cent.

In another financial development this week, Germany has agreed to lend Tunisia 45 million marks (\$28 million) to finance economic reforms and rural development projects.

Under an accord Germany will also provide Tunisia with technical cooperation worth 15 million marks (\$9.3 million).

Russia cuts taxes, raises pensions as protests mount

MOSCOW (R) — Russian officials, responding to tough public criticism of their economic reforms, have announced tax cut on some key products and pledged help for pensioners trying to cope with higher prices.

The measures, which soften the impact of January's price liberalisation, were targeted at vulnerable sectors of the population, Alexander Necbayev, deputy minister for finance and the economy, told reporters.

But the Russian economy would continue to contract, he said. "We cannot stop the spiral of recession this year."

Russian officials have been battling to defend their reform programme from criticism that prices are soaring out of the reach of millions of ordinary people and that industrial output is falling week by week.

A Moscow doctor said Tuesday the average daily calorie intake had fallen to around 2,200 from the recommended minimum of 2,800. Weekly protein intake had slumped to 50 grammes, well below the recommended minimum of 80 to 100 grammes.

Parliamentary speaker Ruslan Khasbulatov has been one of the toughest critics. "Our decisions are a compromise between what we wanted and what parliament wanted," Mr. Necbayev said. "Our aim is to help certain sections of the population."

But Mr. Necbayev said reforms would continue. "It is important not to panic," he said.

The government's concessions to Mr. Khasbulatov and other critics include a decision to slash the rate on its new value added tax on some key products to 15 per cent from 28 per cent.

The number of goods sold at fixed prices will rise again and pensions will rise by 200 roubles a month (\$2 at the Russian central bank's market rate) to a minimum of 550 roubles (\$5).

"We assume measures to increase pensions can be taken once every three months, but unfortunately not more often than that," said Labour Minister Alexander Shokhin. "We are still using old technology like the abacus rather than the computer."

Some estimates showed that 80 or 90 per cent of people were already living below the poverty line, he said.

Ukraine has already moved away from price liberalisation, reintroducing regulated prices for many goods.

"Price liberalisation is thereby annulled and Russia is not travelling the same path as Ukraine," Radio Russia said Tuesday.

The Russian tax and pension measures, which will boost the

first quarter budget deficit by at least 30 billion roubles (\$270 million), fly in the face of the advice from Western experts who want Russia to keep the deficit down.

The government has said it expected a budget deficit of 11 billion roubles (\$100 million) in the first quarter.

The officials also said that tax revenues were below expectations.

"We are collecting taxes very poorly," Mr. Shokhin said. "Tax collection is running behind schedule and by mid-January expenditure was higher than revenue."

Western economists have also criticised the government's decision to free prices without privatising shops and services first, but Mr. Shokhin said privatisation remained a key goal.

About 21,000 shops had already been privatised and the government aimed to sell off 70 per cent by the end of 1992.

But in the meantime companies were reacting to price liberalisation by cutting output rather than forcing prices down. "This is a typical post-socialist reaction," Mr. Shokhin said.

Mr. Shokhin said prices, freed Jan. 2, were now three to 3.5 times higher than in December. The growth had exceeded government expectations that prices would double in January.

By the end of the first quarter prices would be four or five times above December levels, although monthly inflation rates would then slow to about 10 per cent.

Mr. Necbayev said Russia's gross national product would shrink by 16 or 18 per cent in the first quarter, although gross domestic product would fall by about 10 per cent.

There is little evidence of either a functioning market or a working economy one month after Russia freed prices in a move to a market economy.

The price liberalisation was heralded as an essential first step towards removing the shackles of 70 years of communist central planning.

The free prices, which applied to all but a few essential goods, brought products back into sparsely stocked shops. But most customers stayed away, frightened by prices which had often risen four, five or six times overnight.

"The result of opinion polls show that public intolerance is growing as prices disappear up into the clouds," Pravda newspaper has said.

"People knew things would not be easy after price liberalisation but not many of them could have

predicted that they would find themselves below the poverty line," it pointed out.

"It said a poll conducted one week ago showed that 72 per cent of Russians were not satisfied with life and 44 per cent were complaining that price rises were impossible to stem."

No doubt these figures have grown by now," the paper said.

In a market economy, rules on supply and demand normally mean that lower demand for goods forces producers and retailers to cut prices until consumers return.

But this has not been the case in most of Russia, where producers have cut output rather than lower prices.

Moscow's Bolshevik cake factory said last month it was slashing production because customers could not afford to buy more expensive cakes.

ITAR-TASS news agency quoted a Moscow meat factory official as saying stores were sending back meat products because consumers could not afford to buy at higher prices.

"There is a lot of meat (in the factory's refrigerators)," the official said, warning that the factory faced bankruptcy if customers continued to stay away.

The higher prices, which led "a rally of the hungry queues" in the Russian city Tomsk and a string of other demonstrations last month in other Russian towns, have prompted anger at home and criticism from Georgy Matyukhin, head of the Russian Central Bank.

"The central bank position is that price liberalisation should be conducted ... in those sectors of the economy where competition could be set up or exists already," Mr. Matyukhin said in an interview with Sovetskaya Rossiya.

"In monopoly spheres free prices can produce only one result: The monopoly immediately starts to cut down production and increase prices."

This was now happening, he said.

Official forecasts of 400 per cent inflation in the first quarter of this year are widely understated, economists say.

Cuba plans gradual rise in prices of farm products

HAVANA, Cuba (R) — Cuba's authorities, who for 30 years have maintained low, subsidised prices for basic food items, are planning to gradually raise the prices of some farm products to boost production and reduce heavy subsidies.

"This rise in prices... could prove to be a greater stimulus for production because it would allow an increase in the salaries of farm workers with a corresponding rise in work productivity," Cuban state television said in a commentary quoted by the domestic news agency AIN.

It said the rise would add about \$8 to \$10, a relatively small amount, to the monthly spending of the average family. The average monthly wage is \$200.

Most food and consumer goods are rationed and shortages have increased drastically following the break-up of the Soviet Union, Cuba's main supplier for 30 years.

A flourishing, inflationary black market exists in most goods, with consumers sometimes paying more than 20 times over official prices to obtain scarce items.

Cuban authorities have mobilised tens of thousands of workers, many laid off from shut-down factories, to work in the fields in a nationwide food self-sufficiency programme.

President Fidel Castro has advocated a "back to the land" policy, saying the government must provide better living conditions and higher salaries to encourage people to move back to the countryside from the cities and grow food.

"Today we need to increase food production at all costs, but not at any price," Cuban television said.

It said the government had been paying between \$390 million and \$520 million subsidies each year to maintain the prices of basic items at consistently low levels. This was in line with the socialist principles introduced following the 1959 revolution led by President Castro.

"We have to work to reform the internal economy, starting by reducing state spending," the television said.

But it made clear the govern-

ment was not contemplating either a full-scale liberalisation of prices nor relinquishing state control of the production and distribution of food.

A senior economic strategist said that Cuba will have a sharply lower sugar crop and half its normal oil supplies in 1992 but it is tackling the crisis by adapting its socialist economy to survive in a capitalist world.

Carlos Lage, a close adviser of President Fidel Castro and head of the executive committee secretary of the Council of Ministers, outlined the communist-ruled island's current economic strategy in an interview in the communist youth weekly Juventud Rebelde.

Mr. Lage said the collapse of Cuba's preferential trade ties with eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union had slashed the country's external buying power by half.

This development has triggered a serious economic crisis and subsequent tough austerity measures that the government describes as the "special period".

The economic effects of this had damaged the island's capacity to produce its most important export: Sugar.

The (1991-92) harvest has started late and with many material problems," Mr. Lage said. "It will not now be possible to reach or even get close to the seven and a half million tonnes (of sugar) that would have been feasible and desirable," he added.

What sugar was produced would be used to buy food and oil. Cuba produced 7.6 million tonnes in the 1990-91 harvest.

Mr. Lage said the island could only expect to obtain abroad six million tonnes of oil or less for its energy needs in 1992, more than 50 per cent less than its 1989 consumption of 13 million tonnes.

Domestic oil exploration off the northern coast had been stepped up with the help of a foreign oil firm but without any major finds so far. But there had been a small find of good-quality light oil in the central province of Ciego de Avila.

"It's essential to redirect, adapt and transform" the econ-

omy. This can be done but not from night to day, it requires some time," Mr. Lage said.

"It's now necessary to enter the world market and seek new sources of capital," he added.

The government was concentrating its efforts on a food self-sufficiency programme, developing hard-currency tourism and new medical and bio-technological exports and seeking foreign investment from private capitalists.

"We're not applying capitalist formulas. We're applying socialist formulas to live in a capitalist world," Mr. Lage said, explaining that foreign investment did not mean abandoning the country's socialist principles.

Cuba was not giving up state ownership for private ownership nor a planned economy for a market economy.

Mr. Lage said the government would still work to distribute equally the resources available among Cuba's nearly 11 million people. It would not turn to capitalist "shock policies" based on demand-supply theories involving price rises, layoffs and cuts in government social spending.

"Which society can solve this situation without turning to a shock policy? Ours, by employing distribution system and counting on the understanding and collaboration of everyone," Mr. Lage said. Fuel, electricity, food and practically all consumer goods are currently tightly rationed.

Mr. Lage said Cuba had approved around 50 joint ventures or associations with foreign capitalists and more than 100 more were in an advanced state of negotiations.

"The guarantees for foreign investment in Cuba are total," he said.

He cited associations with foreign companies to manufacture and export cosmetics and textiles.

The government was offering tax and tariff breaks and other concessions to foreign investors but was keeping negotiations as secret as possible to avoid interference from the U.S. government, which is maintaining a tight economic embargo against Cuba.

Amman Financial Market weekly trading

Following is a summary of trading during last week and the previous week:

	Feb. 2-5	Jan. 25-29
Daily average	JD 2,458,393	JD 2,839,999
Total volume	JD 7,951,178	JD 14,149,994
Total shares	2,684,908	5,552,535
No. of contracts	2,999	5,747

Sectoral trading:

Industrial	JD 5,418,141 (68.1%)	JD 10,288,586 (72.7%)
Financial	JD 2,146,865 (27.8%)	JD 2,779,275 (19.6%)
Service	(4.8%)	(5.6%)
Insurance	(8.9%)	(2.1%)
Share price index	151.8	151.7
No. of companies	70	79
Price movement (rise)	24	42
(Decline)	22	26
(Stable)	24	11

★ AFM was closed Tuesday due to weather conditions.

LONDON EXCHANGE RATES

LONDON (R) — Following are the buying and selling rates for leading world currencies and gold against the dollar at mid-session on the London foreign exchange and bullion markets Friday.

One Sterling	1.8165/75	U.S. dollars
One U.S. dollar	1.1800/05	Canadian dollar
	1.5800/10	Deutschmarks
	1.7750/00	Dutch guilders
	1.4100/10	Swiss francs
	32.52/56	Belgian francs
	5.3850/00	French francs
	1190/1191	Italian lire
	125.70/80	Japanese yen
	5.7400/50	Swedish crowns
	6.2020/70	Norwegian crowns
	6.1260/1310	Danish crowns
One ounce of gold	355.25/355.75	U.S. dollars

WORLD STOCK MARKETS

TOKYO — Stocks gave up strong early gains to close almost unchanged. Profit-taking and futures-linked selling whittled gains, dealers said. The Nikkei rose 2.20 points or 0.01 per cent to 22,107.12.

SYDNEY — Discount trading dragged the market to a slightly lower close after a rollercoaster day. The All Ordinaries index fell 3.7 points to 1,590.9.

HONG KONG — Local buying after the three-day lunar new year holiday pushed prices up on high turnover. The Hang Seng index rose 39.28 points to 4,711.37.

LONDON — The London share market continued its losing streak and closed lower for the fifth day running. The FTSE 100 index shed 17.1 points to 2,517.2.

NEW YORK — Wall Street stocks remained firm in late-morning trading as investors viewed the decline in non-farm payrolls in January as positive for the interest-rate environment. The Dow was ahead about nine at 3,265.

PARIS — French share prices ended about where they started as data showing U.S. unemployment worsened in January had little effect on the bourse, traders said. The CAC-40 index added just one point to 1,861.61.

U.S. construction spending registers steepest plunge since World War II

WASHINGTON (AP) — Construction spending on U.S. homes, office buildings and other projects shrank 9.3 per cent in 1991, the sharpest contraction since World War II, the government has said.

The severe cutback was concentrated in the first half of the year and spending actually picked up in the last months, though it was down again in November and December.

Separately, a survey of 300 corporate purchasing executives suggested that as the year began the rest of the economy remained sluggish and the manufacturing sector continued to decline.

The National Association of Purchasing Management said its index of business activity was unchanged in January at 47.4 per cent. A reading of less than 50 per cent suggests manufacturing is declining. A reading under 44.5 per cent would indicate the overall economy was shrinking.

The Commerce Department said residential, non-residential and government spending on construction totalled \$404.9 billion last year. That was down from \$446.4 billion in 1990 and marked the lowest level since 1985, when \$377.4 billion was spent on apartments, factories and other private and government buildings.

Last year's decline also was the

first since the recession year of 1982, when spending fell 4.0 per cent. It was the steepest since spending plunged 36.6 per cent in 1944.

Economist David Berson of the Federal National Mortgage Association said most of the decline occurred during the first half of the year. Construction spending actually picked up at a 5.7 per cent annual rate in the last six months, he said.

Analysts attributed the collapse from January through June to the Gulf war, the recession and a glut of already-built structures such as office buildings and shopping centres.

Spending on residential buildings and on government projects fell in December and contributed to a 0.2 per cent decline for the month in overall construction outlays. Total expenditures were \$407.4 billion at a seasonally adjusted annual rate, compared to \$408.4 billion in November.

Mr. Berson forecast continued improvement in the residential sector, particularly single-family homes. The Commerce Department reported last week that applications for building permits, often a barometer of future activity, jumped in December.

Non-residential construction, which inched up 0.2 per cent in

December, dropped 18 per cent during the year, to \$96.7 billion. Spending on office buildings fell 21 per cent over the 12 months while outlays for other commercial projects such as shopping centres dropped 26 per cent.

Despite the slack economy and its effects on revenues, government spending edged up 0.5 per cent last year to \$109.2 billion, although it slipped 0.3 per cent in December.

The government said last month that housing starts plunged 14.9 per cent in 1991 to the lowest level in 46 years.

Activity declined in every region as builders waited for an improvement in the economy to spur sales by recession-wary consumers.

The Commerce Department said builders began construction on 1.015 million single-family homes and apartments last year, down from 1.193 million in 1990 and the smallest number since 325,000 in 1945 as World War II was drawing to a close. Starts soared to 1.023 million units in 1946.

Fixed-rate, 30-year mortgages averaged 8.7 per cent as December began and fell to 8.35 per cent by month's end, according to surveys by the Federal Home Loan Mortgage Corp.

Mortgages began the year at 9.56 per cent and peaked at 9.75 per cent in mid-January before beginning a gradual decline during the remainder of the year.

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Ya Mahallabia Ya

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Cinema Tel: 634144

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in

Naji Al Ali

Arabic

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France, Russia sign landmark treaty

PARIS (R) — France and Russia pledged in a landmark treaty Friday to hold their nuclear arsenals to a "minimum sufficiency," consult on crises and work for a European security treaty.

Presidents Francois Mitterrand and Boris Yeltsin signed the accord, the first between the Russian Federation and a Western country since the collapse of the Soviet Union last year, on the last day of the Russian leader's state visit to Paris.

The 26-article treaty called for annual meetings of the French and Russian presidents, enshrined pledges of economic cooperation and committed the two countries to prevent new division in an increasingly "confederal" Europe.

Stressing a joint commitment to fighting the spread of weapons of mass destruction, it said France and Russia "agree on the need to act so that armaments, in particular nuclear weapons, are held to a level of minimum sufficiency."

"The two parties will cooperate ... with a view to the conclusion of a European security treaty," it

said. Diplomats said this reflected a French drive to give legal force to the European security and cooperation accords, an idea viewed with scepticism by some other Western states.

The text, which supersedes a Franco-Soviet treaty signed by former Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev in Rambouillet in 1990, committed the two countries to consult on crises that threatened international stability, and possibly act together.

France pledged to promote closer ties between Russia and the European Community (EC) to ease its integration into the European economy.

It also promised help and training for Russia's transition to a market economy and pledged to work for full Russian membership of international financial institutions.

On the eve of the signing ceremony, Mr. Yeltsin rounded on a select group of French industrialists, accusing them of hesitating to invest in his new democratic Russia. Italian businessmen, he

told them, had been much more active.

"You are too circumspect," he said. "You've lost quite a lot of time."

Although Russia was in the midst of a painful transition that made it hard to do business, he said the economy would stabilise by the end of the year and would offer lucrative opportunities for firms bold enough to take a risk.

"You'll never get to drink champagne if you don't take risks," Mr. Yeltsin said.

The Russian leader raised the spectre of a new dictatorship if urgent help was not forthcoming to underpin his reforms.

"If our reforms fail, then I tell you we can feel the breath of the brown shirts and red shirts on the back of our necks," he said, referring to the possibility of a fascist or Communist backlash.

France acted by freeing state-backed credits worth some 3.5 billion francs (\$650 million) to buy French grain and industrial goods. Officials raised the sum intended for cereals by 500 million francs (\$90 million) at the

last minute. On Thursday, ministers from both delegations signed 12 agreements that included investment protection, avoidance of dual taxation, training of Russian businessmen and prevention of crime and drug trafficking.

The first day of his visit, which followed trips last week to London, Washington, Ottawa and the United Nations, was devoted largely to disarmament.

Mr. Yeltsin did not press France to make any cuts in its relatively small nuclear arsenal but urged it not to increase its weapons at a time when the United States and Russia were cutting theirs.

Mr. Yeltsin, who displayed a detailed grasp of foreign policy issues according to French officials, clearly relished the elaborate honours of his state visit. He was constantly flanked by members of the elite Republican Guard, dressed in eye-catching livery and brandishing ceremonial swords.

More than one Paris daily referred to him as "Tsar Boris."



Helmut Kohl

Kohl to fight for bigger military role

BONN (R) — German Chancellor Helmut Kohl says he will fight for constitutional change to allow his country's troops to operate beyond NATO's frontiers.

Germany must accept obligations as a U.N. member as well as reap the advantages, Mr. Kohl said in an interview published in the Wall Street Journal Europe Friday.

"Which is why we have to clarify our constitution in that respect (to allow German troops to fight outside NATO territory), and I will fight for that. If necessary I will make it an issue in the next election in 1994," he said.

Mr. Kohl dismissed domestic opposition to lifting a post-World War II constitutional ban on Bonn deploying troops outside the geographical boundaries of the Western alliance.

Germany provided money but no troops to the U.S.-led alliance against Iraq in the Gulf war, prompting criticism from allies that Bonn was shirking its responsibilities.

Mr. Kohl said Germany's new role should include sending troops on United Nations peace missions, a step blocked by opposition Social Democrats (SPD) in parliament.

"We have the obligation to assume more responsibility on an international scale," Mr. Kohl was quoted as saying.

But Kohl told the newspaper he was not interested in seeking a permanent German seat on the U.N. Security Council, which has five permanent members — the United States, Russia, China, Britain and France. "That is not an issue," he said.

The chancellor urged Bonn's industrialised partners to put in more aid for rebuilding former Soviet republics and Eastern Europe after Bonn had pledged or given what he said was 105 billion marks (\$66 billion).

"Now we think it's the others' turn, both in Europe and also in countries that are very far away from Europe. The Japanese, too, draw a great benefit from the changes in Eastern Europe," he said.

Addressing a group of 30 American and other foreign observers monitoring the elections, Premier Theodor Stolojan noted that Romania's young democracy is threatened by "disaffection of many people (who) thought we could raise living standards very quickly after the revolution."

The independent daily Romania Libera commented in an editorial that Romanians felt "cheated" because local elections were not held sooner.

Shelling, infantry attack reported in Croatia

ZAGREB (Agencies) — Croatian defence officials said Friday that Serb-led forces shelled two eastern Croatian strongholds, and that their troops had repelled an infantry attack.

Reported ceasefire violations overnight were among the more serious incidents since a truce halted Croatia's civil war more than a month ago.

At the United Nations, officials announced that Croatian President Franjo Tudjman had unconditionally accepted a plan to deploy U.N. peacekeepers in his republic. Pressure increased on the last boldout, Serb leader Milan Babic of the self-proclaimed Krajina region of Croatia, to do the same.

The 15-member Security Council planned to vote Friday on Secretary-General Boutros Gbali's recommendation to withhold a 10,000-member peacekeeping regiment until Mr. Babic accepts their presence.

Croatian defence officials said about 200 shells landed overnight in and around Osijek, the major city of eastern Croatia, and that three people had been wounded.

Military police and Croatian radio said one person had been killed, but hospital officials could not confirm that.

The defence officials also reported about 50 mortars were fired at Croatian positions around Djakovac, some 35 kilometres southwest of Osijek. No injuries were reported.

They said that under the terms of the truce agreement, their forces did not respond to the shelling. But they said they were forced to repel an infantry attack in the area.

They did not say specifically where the infantry attack occurred.

Officials in Gospić, 150 kilometres southwest of Zagreb, reported firing of anti-aircraft and machine-guns from nearby Serb-held positions in Njegovani. There were no reports of casualties.

The U.N. resolution before the Council would enlarge a 50-member military liaison team monitoring a ceasefire imposed in January to 75 soldiers. It also

reaffirms an arms embargo against all parties.

Although the U.N. plan to deploy up to 10,000 peacekeepers had been accepted by Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic, Mr. Babic continues to reject it because he says it offers insufficient guarantees for Serbs living on Croatian territory.

Leaders of rival ethnic groups in Bosnia-Herzegovina agreed Thursday to hold a conference to decide the republic's future. Bosnia is trying to get international recognition, prompting threats by its Serbs to secede.

A referendum on Bosnia's future is scheduled for late February. Belgrade Radio quoted Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic as saying the conference would not influence the referendum.

At the United Nations, members of the Security Council are divided over when to send in a full peacekeeping force.

France and Russia argued for swift deployment, saying the council should send its peacekeeping troops instead of 25 liaison officers.

Some nations argued that peacekeepers should be sent to other Serb enclaves, avoiding Krajina until Mr. Babic accepts the U.N. plan. That way, they said, the U.N. troops would isolate Mr. Babic and increase pressure on him.

U.S. Ambassador Thomas Pickering, president of the Council for February, told reporters Thursday that many nations opposed the idea of a partial troop deployment.

Russian Ambassador Yuli Vorontsov said the time had come to troop deployment.

"We are very much afraid a new conflagration could occur," he told the Associated Press.

"We don't want to lose the window of opportunity that exists," he said.

Special U.N. envoy Cyrus Vance said at a news conference Thursday that "it is too early to put in a peacekeeping force unless we settle this Babic thing."

He called partial deployment "very unwise," because peacekeeping is especially dangerous without common agreement.

Pakistani minister admits nuclear bomb capability

WASHINGTON (R) — Pakistani Foreign Secretary Shahryar Khan confirmed that his country could assemble at least one nuclear "device," the Washington Post reported Friday.

"The capability is there," Mr. Khan told the Post, adding that Pakistan has "elements which, if put together, would become a device."

This marked the first time that a Pakistani official has publicly acknowledged the extent of Pakistan's nuclear programme.

Mr. Khan said Pakistan has pledged not to explode such a device or transfer its nuclear technology to other Islamic states or Third World countries that want

to obtain it.

Mr. Khan said he was speaking on the record to "avoid credibility gaps." Previously, Pakistan has repeatedly denied U.S. insistence that it possessed the ability to make nuclear weapons.

Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) Director Robert Gates told a U.S. Senate hearing on Jan. 15 that "we have no reason to believe that either India or Pakistan maintains assembled or deployed nuclear bombs. But such weapons could be assembled quickly and both countries have combat aircraft that could be modified to deliver them in a crisis."

16 die after U.S. plane hits motel

EVANSVILLE, Indiana (AP) — A military transport plane ploughed into a motel and restaurant Thursday, spawning blazing fuel and killing 16 people, authorities and witnesses said. At least 19 were injured.

The Lockheed C-130 four-engine turboprop plane crashed into the rear of a Jojo's Restaurant and the north side of the Drury Inn motel shortly before 11 a.m. est (1600 GMT). It had just taken

off from Evansville regional airport, about 1.5 kilometres away, Indiana State Police Sgt. J.R. Rhodes said.

Burning fuel was sprayed hundreds of feet, sending flames 30 metres into the air and creating a tower of black smoke visible for miles.

The cause of the crash wasn't immediately known. A team from Scott Air Force Base in Belleville, Illinois, was investigating.

Five of the dead were members of the Kentucky Air National Guard's 123rd Tactical Airlift Wing. They were on a pilot proficiency training mission, Guard spokesman David Altom said.

Nine people died in the motel and two others were found dead in the restaurant, said Rick Woods, chief deputy coroner for Vanderburgh County. He said no additional victims were expected to be found.

Russian aide calls for breaking up CIS army

MOSCOW (R) — A senior Russian official Friday proposed breaking up Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) into separate national armies, including a Russian one, and uniting them in a NATO or Warsaw Pact-style alliance.

Alexander Kotionkov, deputy chairman of the Russian parliament's Defence Committee, said such a step would lift the painful uncertainty hanging over the 3.7 million-strong Soviet Armed Forces since the break-up of the country last December.

Russian President Boris Yeltsin has so far resisted calls for a national army, saying Russia would remain committed to joint Commonwealth Armed Forces unless other republics forced its hand by opting out and building their own military.

But Mr. Kotionkov noted that five republics — Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan — has already taken

this step — and said his committee would recommend that others, including Russia, do the same.

He told the army newspaper Krasnaya Zvezda in an interview: "The possible drawbacks of the plan, agreed creation of republican armies, and their unification along the lines of NATO or the former Warsaw Pact, are less painful than the suspended, uncertain state in which the armed forces of the former union now find themselves."

Mr. Kotionkov's remarks followed a similar call Wednesday by Mr. Yeltsin's top defence adviser General Konstantin Kobets.

"Russia has its own state interests and it will defend them with force or the possibility of using force. It follows that we will have to work out a military doctrine and create a Russian army," Gen. Kobets told Nezavisimaya

Gazeta newspaper.

Disputes over military matters have dogged the new Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) since its formation in December. The break-up of joint armed forces would raise questions about the Commonwealth's survival.

Creation of a big army by Russia, by far the most powerful of the 15 former Soviet republics, would worry its smaller neighbours and almost certainly raise tension with Ukraine.

The two Slav giants are already waging an acrimonious struggle for control of the Black Sea Fleet, while Ukraine's government is making all Soviet soldiers swear allegiance to Kiev if they want to keep serving on its territory.

The political tug-of-war has further sapped morale among troops, already disillusioned with poor pay and wretched living conditions. The divisive issue of how to finance the military heads the agenda at a meeting of Com-

monwealth prime ministers in Moscow Saturday.

"It is not ruled out that some republics... will attempt to transfer their share of the military spending burden to their Commonwealth partners," Ivan Ivanov, a commentator for ITAR-TASS News Agency, wrote.

Mr. Kotionkov, explaining the need for national armies, said the demise of the Soviet Union meant its soldiers no longer held allegiance to any state, leaving their position under international law uncertain.

But he acknowledged that the break-up of Commonwealth forces was fraught with problems, particularly since Russians made up half of all servicemen and some 70 per cent of the officer corps.

Building a Russian army would involve the return of more than a million soldiers and their families from far-flung corners of the former Soviet Union, he said.

Romania opposition hopes high in local elections

BUCHAREST, Romania (AP) — Campaigning for Romanian local elections — the first in more than 50 years — has ended with widespread expectation that opposition candidates will unseat former Communist boldovers in many areas.

Sunday's elections are seen as a major indicator of political trends prior to parliamentary and presidential elections expected this spring.

Nationwide, more than 140,000 candidates are competing for 2,951 mayoral posts and almost 40,000 city and county council slots. Polls indicated about 80 per cent of the 16,648,000 eligible voters intended to vote.

Where no candidate wins more than 50 per cent of the vote, a runoff will be held the following week between the two top contenders.

Other surveys indicated the governing National Salvation Front (NSF) which came to power during the bloody December 1989 revolution against Communist rule, has lost much support since its landslide victory in general elections in May 1990.

Its major rival is the Democratic Convention, gradually formed over the past year from most of the once-fractured opposition — the National Liberal Party, the National Peasant Party, the Eco-

logical Movement, the Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania, and 10 smaller parties.

The Front appointed most of the current mayors after the revolution. Hundreds who served under Communist dictator Nicolae Ceausescu — who was ousted, then executed — were allowed to keep their positions, fueling popular suspicion that the front is aligned to the former ruling elite.

The Front also lost support because of hardships brought on by economic reforms.

Prices more than quadrupled after being decontrolled in November 1990. Salaries have not kept pace.

About 330,000 Romanians lost their jobs, and further unemployment is expected as privatisation gets under way this year.

Addressing a group of 30 American and other foreign observers monitoring the elections, Premier Theodor Stolojan noted that Romania's young democracy is threatened by "disaffection of many people (who) thought we could raise living standards very quickly after the revolution."

The independent daily Romania Libera commented in an editorial that Romanians felt "cheated" because local elections were not held sooner.

Bush tries to bolster sagging political base with health plan

SAN DIEGO (AP) — President Bush, in a quest to rebuild sagging political support in vote-rich California, is selling his health insurance proposals as an alternative to what he calls a Democratic "prescription for disaster."

"This plan ensures that every worker, regardless of health status, can get health care coverage, can choose providers, can afford care and can keep it," Bush told a group of Nevada health workers Thursday before flying here.

Mr. Bush unveiled his package earlier Thursday calling for \$100 billion in tax credits and deductions over five years to help the poor and middle class buy up to \$3,750 worth of health insurance a year. Part of the cost would be borne by slowing growth of federal Medicaid payments to states.

He called a Democratic proposal to make employers help buy private medical insurance for their workers or pay into a government fund that would provide it a "prescription for disaster." He said that would be a backroad to an even costlier system of national health insurance.

Mr. Bush's popularity in California has plummeted several

percentage points below his national ratings, which are hovering around 46 per cent. In addition to the recession, which hit California hard, tens of thousands of jobs in southern California have been lost to cutbacks in military spending.

The White House strategy is based on the theory that Americans are basically satisfied with the quality of health care in the United States, but want the security of knowing they can get and afford it.

A key Bush proposal is encouraging development of insurance pools that would allow small companies which otherwise could not afford to buy coverage for their workers to approach private insurance providers as a group.

In de-emphasising a government role, Mr. Bush also is tending that Americans must take more responsibility for their own health through exercise, diet and by avoiding substance abuse and unsafe sexual practices.

But both the president and his aides acknowledged the chances of getting his plan through Congress in the face of more sweeping Democratic proposals and the

partisan-charged atmosphere of an election year are slim.

Meanwhile, in Exeter, New Hampshire the Democratic presidential candidates turned on each other as voters began to pay more attention, agreeing on only one thing: To heap scorn on President Bush's health care proposal as an election-year ploy.

Overshadowing a day of frenetic campaigning on health care and economics were questions — and criticism — about Arkansas Gov. Bill Clinton's use of a deferment during the Vietnam War.

"I wouldn't call it sniping. What this is an elevated level of engagement. Voters are paying attention now" as the race speeds toward the Feb. 18 leadoff primary, said Barry Platt, spokesman for Iowa Sen. Tom Harkin.

Mr. Clinton, campaigning before a packed house at a private school, said Mr. Bush's response to the health care crisis, unveiled Thursday, was merely a way to "paper it over with a promise and a photo opportunity."

"George Bush doesn't want to fix the health care system. He wants to fix the election," Mr. Mr. Clinton said.

Nebraska Sen. Bob Kerrey called it "medical Darwinism: Survival of the rich once more."

Iowa Sen. Tom Harkin and former Massachusetts Sen. Paul Tsongas also assailed Mr. Bush's plan for providing no cost controls. Former California Gov. Jerry Brown, in Los Angeles for a fund-raiser, called it a "cruel hoax" that will bust the federal budget.

Democrats also turned their rhetoric on each other.

Sen. Harkin criticised Clinton and Kerrey for their records on children's issues. The Iowa senator released a child-care proposal that calls for a family leave law, subsidising more guidance counsellors for elementary schools and expanding nutrition programmes for women and children.

Gen. Kerrey counterpunched, saying Gen. Harkin's child care proposal merely expands current programmes.

Much of New Hampshire's campaign action centred on a published report that said Mr. Clinton avoided being drafted during the critical two months in 1969 that his draft board told him to expect to be called up. The

Wall Street Journal reported that he agreed to sign up for a reserve officers training programme but never actually joined.

Mr. Clinton denied he tried to avoid the draft, saying he gave up the deferment after two months because "I didn't think it was right to keep it."

Sen. Kerry, a medal of honour winner who lost part of a leg leading a Navy Seal unit, said Mr. Clinton's explanations "just don't have the ring of truth."

"The last thing Bill Clinton needs now is another story questioning his veracity and integrity," said Gen. Harkin, who served as a Vietnam-era cargo pilot based in Japan.

The draft controversy arose just as the Clinton campaign was recovering from unsubstantiated accusations by an Arkansas woman who said she had a 12-year affair with the governor. Mr. Clinton denied the charges.

President Bush, meanwhile, had his top surrogate campaigning in New Hampshire as his wife, Barbara, criticised Congress for not enacting Mr. Bush's economic proposals.

COLUMN

12-year-old arrested in attack on 5-year-old girl

MARQUETTE, Michigan (AP) — A 12-year-old boy sexually assaulted a 5-year-old girl and beat her into a coma, police said. The boy was charged Monday after the girl was found unconscious behind a hotel where she and the Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, boy had been staying with their families, police said. She was in critical condition Tuesday. The boy admitted beating the girl, saying she had been "bugging" him near the hotel's vending machines, police said. He was held by juvenile authorities on \$75,000 bail on charges of assault with intent to kill and criminal sexual conduct. If convicted, he could be held until age 21.

'Nymphomaniac' husband sentenced for prostitution

FORT LAUDERDALE, Florida (R) — A deputy sheriff's wife who said she was diagnosed as a nymphomaniac was sentenced to 400 hours of community service and three years probation for prostitution, Kathy Willets, and her husband, Jeffrey, earned about \$2,000 a week when Kathy acted as a prostitute in their bedroom and her husband watched from a closet and videotaped some clients, according to police investigators. Jeffrey Willets was sentenced to 364 days in jail plus five years probation for acting as a pimp on behalf of his wife. The couple last late last year agreed to plead guilty to prostitution and wire-tapping charges in exchange for cooperating in an investigation of their lawyer's alleged attempts to sell a videotape of one of the sexual encounters. Kathy Willets had claimed she was medically diagnosed as being a nymphomaniac and was advised to satisfy her urges however possible because her husband was impotent. Jeffrey Willets has been suspended from his job as deputy sheriff.

36,000 condoms for Winter Olympics

ALBERTVILLE (R) — Organisers of the Winter Olympics have provided 36,000 condoms for the Albertville games. The good news for 2,200 athletes is that they're free of charge but volunteers, journalists and others accepted to the 16-day games will have to pay for them. "It's a tradition of the games that the best makes condoms available to the athletes," Dominique Montpied, a pharmacist for games organisers Cojo 92, said. The condoms, some of them coloured green, cost 10 francs (\$2) for a pack of three.

Verona pledges to answer letters to Romeo's Juliet

VERONA, Italy (R) — The City Council of Verona, where William Shakespeare set the world's most famous love story, said Monday it had recruited a special team to answer letters sent to Romeo's Juliet. About a dozen letters a week addressed to Juliet arrive in Verona from all over the world, a council spokesman said. The woman who used to answer them quit four years ago. The city assembled the new team after boldering interviews and written tests. "We don't want to reveal their names so that we can keep up an aura of mystery and curiosity," said Culture Councilor Alfredo Meocci. "But I can promise that every letter sent to Juliet will be answered." The council is also running a competition to find the best love letter sent to Juliet.

Wheel clamp turns art robbery to farce

LONDON (R) — A plot to steal art treasures from Britain's National Gallery turned to farce when the robbers found the wheels of their getaway car had been clamped because it was illegally parked, a prosecutor said Monday. None of the three had enough cash to pay the fine needed to get the clamp removed. So, in an incident that the prosecutor compared with an inspector Clouseau "Pink Panther" film, they jacked up the car and tried to do it themselves. Police spotted them and found suspicious objects in the car including two hand grenades and a plan of the National Gallery with a mark against a room containing Van Gogh paintings worth \$240 million, the court heard. The three young men denied all charges of conspiracy to rob and of possessing weapons.